



Gillespie, S. (2018) Petronius on dreams: 300 years of English translations. *Translation and Literature*, 27(2), pp. 195-222.(doi:[10.3366/tal.2018.0338](https://doi.org/10.3366/tal.2018.0338))

This is the author's final accepted version.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/159285/>

Deposited on: 06 April 2018

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

 POETRY IN TRANSLATION

Petronius on Dreams:

300 Years of English Translations

Stuart Gillespie

There is a continuous history of interest in Petronius in the English-speaking world from the middle ages onwards, but, like the works attributed to him, it is too diverse and multi-faceted to be amenable to many generalizations. The subject of this compilation is more manageable: a small, but, at least in some eras, very familiar part of the Petronian corpus; not a single locus but two connected ones. The longer of these two verse passages, with clear origins in Lucretius 4.962ff., forms one of the independent poems or fragments associated with Petronius since ancient times: *Poemata* 30 or 31, depending on the numbering system adopted. The scepticism it expresses towards supernatural explanations of dreams has sometimes influenced readings and translations of the shorter and more neutrally descriptive treatment of dreams found in Section 128 of the *Satyricon*. Both passages have been frequently translated and imitated, and the same English translator has sometimes dealt with both even outside the context of a complete translation of Petronius.

Petronius' long-term reputation has been as a satirist of no great respectability. The respectability is seldom a serious issue in these particular translations, but a satirical flavour is often much to the fore, and many of them belong to the eighteenth-century heyday of English verse satire. This leads to a very unbalanced distribution of translations over time, even if more nineteenth- and especially twentieth-century versions could have been included in this non-comprehensive collection. From a standing start around 1700, the ensuing half-century to 1754 sees the appearance of about a dozen new translations of one passage or, in two cases, of both - a remarkable proliferation, especially considering that what quickly became the standard early English Petronius, by William Burnaby, had appeared in 1694.¹ The translators who knew Burnaby's work evidently felt they had something to add to it; nor,

¹ It will be apparent that this implies qualification of the usual narrative, summed up by a recent translator: 'It is a measure of the dominant distaste for the *Satyricon* that there was only one translation in the eighteenth century.' P. G. Walsh, *The Satyricon* (Oxford, 1997), p. xlv.

it would seem from internal indications, were they often responding to what would today be thought of as the showpiece version of the era, Swift's of 1727. These translations have a high degree of independence from their predecessors.

If this steady stream of translations and imitations cannot be explained as a series of responses to English precursors, what powers it? Apart from the approachable scale and inherent attractiveness of the passages, their availability and familiarity are factors that should not be overlooked. They often appeared in anthologies and other compilations of Latin verse, some of them compilations used for the teaching of Latin in schools, some of them compilations intended to assist the would-be English poet.² After the point in time at which this no longer applies, the background for individual translations changes. Before this point they are most often independent compositions. After it, they tend to be produced as part of a complete Petronius or complete *Satyricon*. Of the latter class there is no shortage, but examples often fail to reach the standard set for admission here: for one thing, translators of the complete Petronius frequently have little or no experience in composing English verse. There are few exceptions to this rule in the twentieth century.

Here, the two Latin texts, which undergo no significant revisions at the hands of editors over these centuries, are first supplied, with plain prose translations. The historical translations of both passages are mixed together thereafter, chronology determining their order of appearance. In these texts roman and italic fonts may be silently reversed, and ornamental capital letters ignored.

I am grateful to Barry Baldwin, Andrew Radford, and Karina Williamson for providing supplementary information. Alistair Elliot allowed me a glimpse into his workshop as well as the use of its products, which can be found at the conclusion of this compilation.

University of Glasgow

² One example in the second category is Henry Baker's *Medulla Poetarum Romanorum* (1737), a two-volume assemblage of verse passages thematically arranged, with enface Latin and English translations drawn from the works of familiar English writers. Both the Petronius passages are included here, rolled together into one, along with translations spliced together, without acknowledgement, from three sources (all of which appear below).

Satyricon, Section 128

Nocte soporifera veluti cum somnia ludunt
errantes oculos effossaque protulit aurum
in lucem tellus: versat manus improba furtum
thesaurosque rapit, sudor quoque perluit ora
et mentem timor altus habet, ne forte gravatum
excutiat gremium secreti conscius auri:
mox ubi fugerunt elusam gaudia mentem
veraque forma redit, animus, quod perdidit, optat
atque in praeterita se totus imagine versat ...

As when dreams deceive our wandering eyes in the heavy slumber of night, and under the spade the earth yields gold to the light of day: our greedy hands finger the spoil and snatch at the treasure, sweat too runs down our face, and a deep fear grips our heart that maybe some one will shake out our laden bosom, where he knows the gold is hid: soon, when these pleasures flee from the brain they mocked, and the true shape of things comes back, our mind is eager for what is lost, and moves with all its force among the shadows of the past.

(Michael Heseltine)

Poemata 30/31

Somnia quae mentes ludunt volitantibus umbris,
 non delubra deum nec ab aethere numina mittunt,
 sed sibi quisque facit. Nam cum prostrata sopore
 urget membra quies et mens sine pondere ludit,
 quidquid luce fuit tenebris agit. Oppida bello
 qui quatit et flammis miserandas eruit urbes,
 tela videt versasque acies et funera regum
 atque exundantes profuso sanguine campos.
 Qui causas orare solent, legesque forumque
 et pavidi cernunt inclusum chorte tribunal.
 Condit avarus opes defossumque invenit aurum.
 Venator saltus canibus quatit. Eripit undis
 aut premit eversam periturus navita puppem.
 Scribit amatori meretrix, dat adultera munus:
 et canis in somnis leporis vestigia lustrat.
 In noctis spatium miserorum vulnera durant.

It is not the shrines of the gods, nor the powers of the air, that send the dreams which mock the mind with flitting shadows; each man makes dreams for himself. For when rest lies about the limbs subdued by sleep, and the mind plays with no weight upon it, it pursues in the darkness whatever was its task by daylight. The man who makes towns tremble in war, and overwhelms unhappy cities in flame, sees arms, and routed hosts, and the deaths of kings, and plains streaming with outpoured blood. They whose life is to plead cases have statutes and the courts before their eyes, and look with terror upon the judgement-seat surrounded by a throng. The miser hides his gains and discovers buried treasure. The hunter shakes the woods with his pack. The sailor snatches his shipwrecked bark from the waves, or grips it in death-agony. The woman writes to her lover, the adulteress yields herself: and the dog follows the tracks of the hare as he sleeps. The wounds of the unhappy endure into the night-season.

(Michael Heseltine)

William King

To William King (1663-1712), in his own time a well enough known poet and miscellaneous writer, may belong the minor distinction of being the first English translator of part of this passage, but this is uncertain since its precise date cannot be determined. It first appeared in King's *Posthumous Works*, 1734, whence this text is taken. He might easily not have been responsible for the rather tenuous link the epigraph makes with Ecclesiastes.

Of DREAMS.

ECCLES. Ch. V. Ver. 4. *For a Dream cometh through the multitude of Business.*

*Somnia quæ ludunt Mente volitantibus Umbris,
Non delubra Deum nec ab Æthere numina mittunt
Sed sibi quisque facit, &c.*

PETRONIUS

The flitting *Dreams* that play before the Wind,
Are not by Heav'n for *Prophesies* design'd;
Nor by *Æthereal-Beings* sent us down,
But each Man is *Creator* of his own.

For when their weary *Limbs* are sunk in Ease,
The *Souls* essay to wander where they please;
The *scatter'd Images* have space to play,
And *Night* repeats the *Labours* of the Day.

William Burnaby, 1694

When Burnaby (1673-1706) and an anonymous collaborator undertook their translation of the *Satyricon*, the young Burnaby was (in theory) undergoing legal training as a member of the Middle Temple. It was titled *The Satyr of Titus Petronius Arbiter, a Roman Knight. With its fragments, recover'd at Belgrade*. The manuscript fragments supposedly found after the sack of Belgrade in 1688 were a forgery by François Nodot; Burnaby was sceptical about their authenticity, but it is thought their appearance, and especially a 1693 London printing of Nodot's edition, gave him his motivation and opportunity. This vigorous translation became standard, and was much reprinted. These passages as well as others were often appropriated as anthology pieces or in composite versions of Petronius by 'several hands', sometimes without acknowledgement. Burnaby's later ventures as a playwright were considerably less successful with the public.

So when a Dream our wandring Eyes betrays,
 And to our side some hidden Gold conveys;
 Our busie hands th' inviting Treasure seize,
 And hide in guilty folds the fancy'd prize.
 Sweating we fear lest any conscious spy,
 Might search our bosom, and the theft descry.
 But with our sleep when all our joys are o're,
 And minds restor'd to what they were before,
 Concern'd, we wish the fancy'd Loss regain'd,
 And with the Image still are entertain'd.

* * *

When in a dream presented to our view,
 Those airy Forms appear so like the true;
 Not Heaven nor Hell the fancy'd Visions sends,
 But every breast its own delusion lends:
 For when soft sleep the body wraps in ease,
 And from th' unactive mass our fancy frees,
 Whatever 'tis in which we take delight,

And think of most by day, we dream at night.

Thus he, the now sackt City justly fear'd,

Who all around had death and ruin shar'd,

From fancy'd darts believes a darkned sky,

And Troops retreating in confusion fly:

<New page> There the sad Funeral pomp of Kings; here)

Conscious Plains, half drown'd in blood, appear.)

He that by day has nois'd it at the Bar,)

Of Knaves and Fools now sees the great resort,

And to meet justice vainly fears in Court.

Misers amidst their heaps are raising new,)

And think they oft their old hid treasure view.)

And Huntsmen the imagin'd Chace pursue.)

The Merchant dreams of Wrecks, the Ship wou'd save,

Or now, by sinking it, himself preserve.

The Mistress to her distant lover writes;

And, as awake, with flames and darts indites:

The Goodwife dreaming of her Stallion's charms,

Oft seeks the pleasure in her Cuckold's arms.

Dogs on full cry, in sleep, the Hare pursue,

And hapless wretches their old griefs renew.

Anon., 1706

A version taken from *Miscellanea Poetica, or, Original Poems upon Several Occasions; with Translations*, 1706. The anonymous writer of this short collection described himself in his Preface as 'a young author'. Nothing further is known of his identity.

A Fragment from *Petronius*

Thus dreams delude us in our Sleep at night,

And to some Hidden Store our Steps invite.

We, the Gay Treasure open'd to our Eyes,

Need few Enticements to so Fair a Prize:

But grasp with Guilty Hands the Gold, and fear
Lest the too Wakeful Owner should be near.
But when with Sleep these Images retreat,
Awake we're troubled to perceive the Cheat:
And tho we cant the Aery Treasure find,
Yet still the Dream continues in our Mind.

Thomas Burnet, c.1715

Burnet (1694-1753), son of Bishop Gilbert Burnet, was intended for the law, but like many another young man of his time turned to writing, and in particular to satire. This translation was first printed in his posthumous works of 1777: *Verses Written on Several Occasions, between the years 1712 and 1721*.

In dreams when images amuse the mind,
 The Gods are idly, as the cause, assign'd:
 It's birth to troubl'd brain the phantom owes;
 For when our weary limbs in soft repose,
 Free from the motion of the spirits lay,
 Eas'd of her clog, the soul begins to play.
 Whate'er the day presented to the sight,
 She acts it over and improves at night.

The Soldier, who in tumult sought renown,
 And oft to flames bequeath'd the hostile town,
 Sees arms, and routed troops, and kings laid low,
 And fields, that once were green, with crimson glow.

The advocate, addicted to debate,
 Pleads o'er his cause, as if the court were set:
 His useless wealth the miser hides from sight,
 And digs imaginary mines all night.

The huntsman hollows to no beagle's cry;
 The Pilot sees the fancied waves on high,
 And now he steers his bark with happy skill,
 And now he feels his leaky vessel fill.

Chloe does kindly to her keeper write;
 While lustful *Lais* purchases delight.

The Dog barks at the Hare he could not scent,
 And wounds, though clos'd, in dreams renew their vent.

Jonathan Swift, 1727

Written about 1724, this was first published in Swift's *Miscellanies* in 1727, but this text is corrected from his *Poems* of 1735. In Swift's remarkable reworking each stanza (after the first two) equates, by alternating them, 'high' and 'low' crimes: this composition has less to do with dreams than with the corruption endemic to society.

ON DREAMS

an Imitation of PETRONIUS

Those Dreams that on the silent Night intrude,
 And with false flitting Shades our Minds delude,
Jove never sends us downward from the Skies,
 Nor can they from infernal Mansions rise;
 But are all meer Productions of the Brain,
 And Fools consult Interpreters in vain.

For, when in Bed we rest our weary Limbs,
 The Mind unburthen'd sports in various Whims,
 The busy Head with mimic Art runs o'er
 The Scenes and Actions of the Day before.

The drowsy Tyrant, by his Minions led,
 To regal Rage devotes some Patriot's Head.
 With equal Terrors, not with equal Guilt,
 The Murd'rer dreams of all the Blood he spilt.

The Soldier smiling hears the Widow's Cries,
 And stabs the Son before the Mother's Eyes.
 With like Remorse his Brother of the Trade,
 The Butcher, feels the Lamb beneath his blade.

The Statesman rakes the Town to find a Plot,
 And dreams of Forfeitures by Treason got.

Nor less Tom-Turd-man of true Statesman mold,
Collects the City Filth in search of Gold.

Orphans around his Bed the Lawyer sees,
And takes the Plaintiff's and Defendant's Fees.
His Fellow Pick-Purse, watching for a Job,
Fancies his Fingers in the Cully's Fob.

The kind Physician grants the Husband's Prayers,
Or gives Relief to long-expecting Heirs.
The sleeping Hangman ties the fatal Noose,
Nor unsuccessful waits for dead Mens Shoes.

The grave Divine with knotty Points perplex,
As if he were awake, nods o'er his Text:
While the sly Mountebank attends his Trade,
Harangues the Rabble, and is better paid.

The hireling Senator of modern Days,
Bedaubs the guilty Great with nauseous Praise:
And *Dick* the Scavenger with equal Grace,
Flirts from his Cart the Mud in *Walpole's* Face.

Anon., 1729

This fluent treatment appeared in a collection of poems and translations entitled *Versus inopes rerum, nugaeque canorae. Commonly call'd Poems on Several Occasions*, and seems never to have been reprinted. The unknown author describes these works as 'the very genuine Fruits of Love and Laziness', and as for himself, he writes, 'Poetry is not the Character in Life I aspire to.'

From the fragments of PETRONIUS.

When Limbs fatigu'd the god of sleep obey,
And leave the sportive Soul at large to play,
It then unweari'd, in the Shades of Night,
Acts o'er again the Business of the Light.

The Soldier who has late beseig'd a Town,
Sees nought but Flames and Bulwarks overthrown;
Swift flying Darts and bloody Fields he views,
And eager in his Sleep the Foe pursues.

The Lawyer too for Quibbles fam'd and rare,
Profoundly skill'd i'th' Jargon of the Bar;
Chain'd down in Sleep if once his Body lies,)
His guilty Soul straight to the *Forum* flies,)
Where waking he for wealthy Clients plies.)

The greedy Miser turns the fruitful Mould,
And finds conceal'd an useless Heap of Gold.

The watchful Hunter hears the scenting Hound,
And hears the Cry from echoing Woods resound.

The Sailor views the Sea in various Form,
Now quite becalm'd, now founder'd in a Storm.

The Courtizan is writing billet-doux;
The Adult'ress is deceiving of her Spouse.

Nor can the crafty Dog in sleep forbear
To trace the Footsteps of the trembling Hare.

The Wretched in the Night retain their Woes,
Nor with their Eyes will Sense of Sorrow close.

Anon., 1729 (30 lines)

This version appeared in *The New-England Weekly Journal*, a broadsheet which carried news ‘foreign and domestick’. Basing their look and flavour on older-established organs like the *Gentleman’s Journal*, such news sheets often cultivated a high cultural tone (this issue was headed by an epigraph from Virgil), and translations of short classical pieces - an ode of Horace, for instance - were not infrequently included. In this case the *en face* Latin strongly implies that at least some readers were able to appreciate ‘how exactly the sense of the Author is given’, as the editor’s brief introduction claims. These translations were usually announced, like this one, as contributions by correspondents, i.e. readers.

Dreams, on whose fleeting shades our fancy’s rove,
 Come not from temples, or the God’s above,
 But we create them: when to sleep we lay)
 Our weary’d limbs, the mind unlock’d can play,)
 And act again by night, whate’er was done by day.)
 The warrior that with fire and sword makes haste
 To storm a town, or lay a country waste,
 Sees slaughtered kings, and army’s, and a flood
 O’reflowing with imaginary blood.
 The pleader dreams of causes, courts and law,
 And by the judges looks is struck with awe.
 Gold is conceal’d, or dug in misers ground:
 The forests with the hunter’s dogs resound.
 The sailor, struggling with the winds and waves,
 Sinks with the wreck, or else the vessel saves.
 A flatt’ring mistress to her lover writes:
 With presents, a false wife her spark invites.
 The barking dog pursues the hare in sleep;
 The wretches wounds all night their throbbing keep.

William Dunkin

William Dunkin (1706/7-1765) was an Irish-born poet whose scholarly career at Trinity College Dublin eventually resulted in his graduating DD in 1744. His version of Petronius was posthumously printed in his *Poetical Works* of 1774. 'Curl' is the much-pilloried bookseller Edmund Curll (1675-1747).

ON DREAMS, A FRAGMENT

Somnia quæ ludunt mentes, &c.

Delusive dreams, which through the fancy rove,
Are not the real messengers of Jove,

<New page> But creatures of the brain; for, when the limbs
Are lull'd to rest, imagination swims:

Our active minds in visionary play
At night re-act the business of the day.

The dreadful warrior, who with vengeful ire
Storms wretched towns, and hurls destructive fire,
Sees arms, and routed troops, and monarchs slain,
And bloody torrents, rolling o'er the plain.

Lawyers through past indictments hunt for flaws,
And partial judges, who decreed the cause,
Like Wh—— on the bench, with horror start,
And dread the silent sentence of the heart.

The starving miser hides his ill-got store,
Or finds the treasure which he hid before.

The jolly huntsman chides the drowsy morn,
Besets the woods, and winds his vocal horn.

The faithful beagle, with erected ear,
Pants for his prey, and bays the fancy'd deer.

The ghastly sailor scarce escapes a wreck,
Or sinking sees his ruin on the deck.

The soldiers, snoring on their Benches, curse,
While Mira gives the centinel a purse,

And, fondly billing in the centry-box,
Rewards his service with a swinging p—.
C—— pleads his conscience for unrighteous deeds,
While Swift in secret for Hibernia bleeds.

The grave divine, perplexing, and perplext,
As if awake, still dozes o'er his text.

The parish-clerk betwangs his noseful note,
And Amen sticks half mutter'd in his throat.
Afflicted L——, chill'd with panic dread,
Despairs to mourn, nor thinks her husband dead:
But, quick recover'd from her fright, proceeds
To wed a second, in her sable weeds.

The bards of Curl, while blanketless they lie
On litter'd couches, tenants of the sky,
To whet their parts, with eager jaws begin
Adust to quaff imaginary gin.

John Addison, 1736

Nothing is known of John Addison other than two published translations: his originally anonymous *Works of Anacreon*, with Sappho, 1735, and his *Works of Petronius Arbiter* of 1736. But his preface shows him keenly appreciative of Petronius, poet and satirist, whose purity he defends, supporting that defence by reprinting, as did others concerned to uphold his reputation, an English translation of Charles de Saint-Evremond's critical essay on Petronius.

†As when in Sleep our wanton Fancy sports,
 And our fond Eyes with hidden Riches courts,
 We hug the Theft; the smiling Treasure fills
 Our guilty Hand[s]; the conscious Sweat distills;
 Whilst lab'ring Fear sits heavy on the Mind,
 Lest the big Secret should an Utt'rance find.
 But when with Night th' illusive Joys retreat,
 And our Eyes open to the gay Deceit,
 That which we ne're possest, as lost, we mourn,
 And for imaginary Blessings burn.

* * *

Th' illusive Dreams which on the Mind attend,
 Nor Shrines* inspire, nor from the Gods descend;
 But from ourselves; when Nature sleeping lies,
 These Mimicks of th' unburthen'd Fancy rise.
 What most in Day affects, at Night returns:
 Thus he who shakes proud States, and Cities burns,
 Sees Show'rs of Darts, forc'd Lines, disorder'd Wings,

† This Comparison is suppos'd by some ingenious Men, to be a Banter upon *Nero*, for his visionary Hopes of finding the Treasures which *Dido* brought from *Tyre*. *Tacitus* gives us a particular Relation of this Whim in the 14th Book of his Annals.

* Alluding to those Temples where Oracles were deliver'd to the Consultors in their Sleep.

Fields drown'd in Blood, and Obsequies of Kings.
The Lawyer dreams of Terms and double Fees,
And trembles when he long Vacation sees.
The Miser hides his Wealth, new Treasure finds.
Thro' echoing Woods his Horn the Huntsman winds.
The Sailor's Dream a Shipwrack's Chance describes.
The Whore writes Billet-doux. Th' Adultrous bribes,
The op'ning Dog the tim'rous Hare pursues:
And Misery in Sleep its Pain renews.

Anon., 1751

This version appeared in a university journal, *The Student, or, the Oxford, and Cambridge Monthly Miscellany*. In 1750 this journal came under the control of Christopher Smart, who contributed many essays and poems. This is probably not one of them, since these were usually signed either in his own name or pseudonymously, as this is not; but it might be written by an acquaintance, or, at least, Smart would have welcomed so impressive a contribution.

On DREAMS.

From a FRAGMENT of PETRONIUS ARBITER.

Somnia, quæ mentes ——— &c.

Whence come these dreams, this busy idle train
 Of airy forms, that flutter round the brain ?
 Sure not from heav'n descend these trifling guests;
 No, they are creatures form'd within our breasts;
 The sport of Fancy; which, while slumbers bind)
 Th' unconscious sense, leaves the dull mass behind,)
 Treads fairy ground, and wantons unconfin'd;)
 By night the labours of the day renews,
 In mimic forms the various theme pursues.

Flush'd with the hopes of conquest, from afar
 The Soldier views the dreadful scenes of war;
 Grasps his drawn sword, directs the pointed force,
 Dismounted cries, *A kingdom for a horse*;
 Tramples on kings expiring on the plain,
 Wades thro' a sea of blood, and strides o'er hills of slain.

The Pleader anxious weighs the dubious cause,
 With specious gloss explains away the laws;
 With trembling heart surveys the crowded bar
 And awful judge in solemn state appear.

The Miser still new mines of treasure spies,
Broods o'er his bags, and hugs the secret prize.

The Huntsman joyous hears the vocal hound,
Horns wind, men hollow, and the woods resound:
The faithful Hound with sympathizing care
Takes scent, and in full cry pursues the circling hare.

<New page>

The Sailor views in storms his vessel tost,
And busily explores some friendly coast;
Or in vain struggles impotent to save
Sinks with his found'ring ship beneath th' o'erwhelming wave.

Th' impatient Nymph her absent lover woos,
Pours out her soul in tender billet-doux;
The sly Adultrous *Fondlewife* betrays,
To her gallant the hinting bribe conveys.

Sure here at least the wretched find relief;
Absence from thought, and interval from grief.
Vain hope! still here familiar horrors reign,)
In troubled thought the wounded bleed again,)
And self-tormented feel th' extremities of pain.)

Anon., 1754

This version consists of a lively enough translation followed by a coda which has very little to do with Petronius. It appeared in the *Scots Magazine* in 1754, when this was a highbrow journal mixing public and political affairs, practical subjects such as gardening, and poems. Poetry contributions normally went unsigned.

On DREAMS. Imitated from Petronius

These airy phantoms, which, when sable night
 Hath drawn her curtain, fleet before our sight,
 Are not from heaven; they come not from the skies,
 To lay the future open to our eyes;
 But are, by each man's diff'rent fancy wrought,
 The shadowy images of waking thought.
 For though that gentle soft'ner of our woes,
 Sweet sleep, our bodies can to rest compose;
 Our active minds awake, still freely play,
 And are by night the same they were by day.

The gallant vet'ran thus, bred up in war,
 His manly forehead mark'd with many a scar,
 Asleep is still a soldier: in his dreams
 Hears trumpets sound, sees cities wrapt in flames,
 Armies engaging; treads o'er heaps of slain,
 And fights his once-fought battles o'er again.

<New page> In elbow-chair the lawyer lolls at ease;
 Gives his advice, and, courteous, takes his fees;
 In doubtful case a learn'd memorial draws,
 Or seems to plead some wealthy client's cause.

The narrow-minded wretch, who dotes on pelf,
 Whose sordid views are center'd all in self,
 With greedy eye surveys his golden store,
 Or finds, deep hid in earth, the treasur'd ore.

The sportsman on his nimblest courser borne
 Alongst the forest, hears the echoing horn,
 And whilst he eager beats the well-known grounds,
 Transported listens to his op'ning hounds.

The skilful mariner, when tempests roar,
 Conducts the beaten vessel safe to shore;
 Or sinking with the crew he cannot save,
 In deeps of ocean finds a wat'ry grave.

The bashful virgin seeks the dusky grove,
 Or shaded arbor, sweet retreat of love!

There, to some friend, who soothes her am'rous pain,
Blushing reveals her passion for the swain.

Not so it fares with the enamour'd boy:
His fancy gives him more substantial joy;
With ravish'd eye he views his fair one's charms,
Then clasps her, yielding, dying, in her arms.

O thou, adorn'd with each attractive grace;
In ev'ry feature of whose beauteous face
(More powerful charm than all thy sex's art)
Fair Virtue shines, and captivates the heart:
Shouldst thou, my ROSALINDA, thus appear;
Should fancy paint thee kind, as thou art fair;
Then may I ne'er behold th' unwelcome day,
But, happier thus, dream all my life away;
Thy angel-form still present to my view;
Still may I think the dear delusion true.

Anon., 1782

This version appeared in the ‘Poet’s Corner’ column of a very commercially oriented local news sheet, the *Independent Gazetteer*, Philadelphia, on 21 December 1782. The unique use of inverted commas for a four-line segment near the end might represent no more than a printer’s fancy, or error.

DREAMS.

Dreams, the delusive phantoms of the brain,
 From nor in Heaven nor Hell their airy train,
 But in our minds; for when by sleep possess’d,
 The lazy body lies dissolv’d in rest,
 The active soul sports on her usual way,
 And thinks by night, on what occur’d by day.
 To the lov’d maid the youth his billet sends,
 The rake by bribes his passion recommends;
 The lawyer at the bar his station keeps,
 And to the bench nods humbly as he sleeps.
 ‘The miser hoards his pelf and guards the door,
 ‘Tending alike against the thief and poor;
 ‘Nor are the oppressor’s crimes in sleep forgot,
 ‘He starts appall’d – for conscience slumbers not.’
 Through echoing forrests huntsmen bear away,
 And beagles in full cry pursue the flying pray.

Thomas Love Peacock, 1806

Peacock (1785-1866) had a long-term interest in Petronius, but their affinity is normally seen in terms of their standing as satirical novelists, not as writers of poetry. This version formed one item in the eclectic collection of poems and translations *Palmyra, and Other Poems* which the young Peacock published in 1806.

DREAMS.

FROM PETRONIUS ARBITER

Somnia, quæ mentes ludunt volitantibus umbris, &c.

Dreams, which, beneath the hov'ring shades of night,
Sport with the ever-restless minds of men,
Descend not from the gods. Each busy brain
Creates its own. For when the chains of sleep
Have bound the weary, and the lighten'd mind
Unshackled plays, the actions of the light
Become renew'd in darkness. Then the chief,
Who shakes the world with war, who joys alone
In blazing cities, and in wasted plains,
O'erthrown battalions sees, and dying kings,
And fields o'erflow'd with blood. The lawyer dreams
Of causes, of tribunals, judges, fees.
The trembling miser hides his ill-gain'd gold,
And oft with joy a buried treasure finds.
The eager hunter with his clam'rous dogs
Makes rocks and woods resound. The sailor brings
His vessel safe to port, or sees it whelm'd
Beneath the foaming waves. The anxious maid
Writes to her lover, or beholds him near.
The dog in dreams pursues the tim'rous hare.
The wretch, whom Fortune's iron hand has scourg'd,
Finds in his slumbers all his woes reviv'd.

Robert Gray, 1808

Robert Gray (1762-1834) was Bishop of Bristol. His two-volume study of dreams tackles the subject through literary-historical treatments in a loosely chronological fashion, from the ancient Greeks, the Romans, the Jews, and on to the Christian era, as his title implies: *The Theory of Dreams: In which an Inquiry is made into the Powers and Faculties of the Human Mind, as they are illustrated in the most remarkable Dreams recorded in sacred and profane History*. Gray appears to have been responsible for all of the many verse translations he included.

The fleeting spectres which in dreams arise
 Come not from temples, or indulgent skies;
 The mind creates them, when its powers uncheck'd
 May sport, and leave the body in neglect.
 The hero sees disorder'd legions fly,
 And helpless monarchs bath'd in slaughter die,
 Renews the war, besieged towns assails,
 With sword and flames the lofty fortress scales.
 In visionary courts the lawyers spar,
 And convicts tremble at th' ideal bar.
 Still o'er his hidden gold the miser quakes,
 The sportsman still with dogs the woodlands shakes:
 The skilful mariner the vessel saves,
 Or buffets, from the wreck escap'd, the waves.
 All that affection breathes by love is penn'd,
 And tokens sent which love delights to send.
 Ev'n dogs in sleep the same impressions bear,
 And tongue the scented footsteps of the hare.
 The wretched must the wounds of mis'ry feel,
 Though night's still influence on the world should steal.

Harriet Waters Preston

Harriet Waters Preston (1836-1911) was a native of Massachusetts who spent her twenties in Italy, France, and England, returning to the USA in 1865. She became a prolific writer and translator, with both nineteenth-century French prose and ancient Latin verse sources to her credit, and published numerous original works too, some of them reflecting her historical interests. The text is taken from the thirty-volume *Library of the World's Best Literature*, 1917.

The dreams that tease us with their phantoms eerie
 Come not from holy shrine nor heavenly space,
 But from within. Sleep stays the limbs a-weary,
 The truant spirit goes its wanton ways.
 Deeds of the day, deeds of the dark. The warrior
 Sees hosts in flight and hapless towns on fire;
 The monarch slain confronts his fell destroyer,
 Amid a weltering waste of blood-stained mire.
 The Forum's all-triumphant pleader trembles
 Before the law, or frets within the bar;
 The miser his unearthed gold assembles,
 And baying hounds the huntsman call afar;
 The sinking seaman grasps the vessel keeling,
 The courtesan indites a billet-doux,
 The debauchee counts out his coin unwilling,
 The very dogs in dreams their hare pursue.

Sebastian Melmoth (*pseud.*), 1902

Renewed interest in the *Satyricon* was kindled by a translation which appeared in Paris in 1902 under the name 'Sebastian Melmoth', the pen name Oscar Wilde had used after his exile. The attribution has been much doubted, but the translation has been commended, and it had the distinction of being the first full and unexpurgated English translation for 150 years. The poems and other verse passages are often said to be derivative, and to borrow too much from previous English translations, especially those by Burnaby and Addison, but this is not evident in these two cases. The translation was reprinted as Wilde's in 1927, then under the name of Arthur Allison in 1930, for 'private circulation among adult collectors of erotica'.

As when in sleep our wanton Fancy sports,
 And our fond eyes with hidden riches courts,
 We hug the theft; the smiling treasure fills
 Our guilty hands; the conscious sweat distills;
 Whilst laboring fear sits heavy on the mind,
 Lest the big secret should an utterance find.
 But when with night th' illusive joys retreat,
 And our eyes open to the gay deceit,
 That which we ne'er possessed, as lost, we mourn,
 And for imaginary blessings burn.

* * *

Dreams that delude our minds with shadows vain
 Are not heaven-sent. But each man's proper brain
 Forges these nothings; and the mind at play
 Doth nightly reënact the deeds of day,
 While the tired body sleeps. The conqueror
 Who cities shakes, loosing the dogs of War,
 Sees brandished spears, and routs, and deaths of Kings,
 And blood, and all the horrors battle brings.
 What sees the lawyer?— ranged a dreadful show,
 The bench, the bar, the judges all a-row!

The miser dreams of gold, lost treasure finds.
In woodland ways his horn the huntsman winds.
The sailor's vision scenes of wreck describes.
The harlot wheedles; the adultress bribes.
The sleeping hound the flying hare pursues;
And each unhappy wretch old griefs renews.

Helen Waddell, 1927

Waddell introduced the selections from Petronius in her well-known anthology *Medieval Latin Lyrics* via Tacitus, writing: ‘There was a grace of casualness about him, said Tacitus, a sort of unconcern, that gave him a curious simplicitas. Tacitus, beyond all historians, has the humanity that means the gift of divination; he had pierced to the secret spring, the spirit that corruption could not touch, the Petronius not of the Satyricon, but of the thirty-odd poems scattered through mediaeval anthologies.’

There is a musical setting of this translation by Martin Bussey within his song sequence *Through a Glass Darkly*, first performed in 2005.

Dreams, dreams that mock us with their flitting shadows,
 They come not from the temples of the gods,
 They send them not, the powers of the air.
 Each man makes his own dreams. The body lies
 Quiet in sleep, what time the mind set free
 Follows in darkness what it sought by day.
 He who makes kingdoms quake for fear and sends
 Unhappy cities ruining in fire,
 Sees hurtling blows and broken fighting ranks
 And death of kings and sodden battle fields.
 The lawyer sees the judge, the crowded court,
 The miser hides his coin, digs buried treasure,
 The hunter shakes the forests with his hounds,
 The sailor rescues from the sea his ship,
 Or drowning, clings to it. Mistress to lover
 Writes a love-letter: the adulteress
 Yields in her sleep, and in his sleep the hound
 Is hot upon the traces of the hare.
 The wounds of the unhappy in the night
 Do but prolong their pain.

Jack Lindsay, 1927

Jack Lindsay (1900-1990), a Classics graduate of the University of Queensland, left Australia for Britain in 1926. He earned his living as a small press publisher and prolific writer: of historical novels, poetry and plays, and of studies in art history and many other subjects. He translated Propertius, the Homeric Hymns, Theocritus, and two other ancient novels as well as the *Satyricon: Daphnis and Chloe* and *The Golden Ass*. Lindsay's *Complete Works of Petronius* is part of a long sequence of twentieth-century translations by academics and others, including W. C. Firebaugh (1922), Paul Dinnage (1953), William Arrowsmith (1959), J. P. Sullivan (1965), and P. G. Walsh (1999).¹ These are represented very sparingly here, but Lindsay's verse is of a different order from most. Both the 1927 first edition and a 1944 reissue contained 100 illustrations by the translator's father, the artist Norman Lindsay.

As a cheat of dreams befools us, and our eyes
 See in the pool of mirroring sleep dark lies,
 And up to glittering thought the spade brings gold –
 In a sweat of lust our twitching hands catch hold
 And we've a sudden fear some one will find
 That treasure, creeping down lanes of the shadowy mind ...
 But at last morning clouts all dreams away,
 Harsh the walls of earth's stark existence stand –
 Eager to finger a dream again, we stray
 Through a phantom land ...

In his preface Lindsay writes that inserting *Poemata* 30/31 into the text of the *Satyricon* is the 'chief licence' he has taken: 'its apt and effusive incongruity is very much in Encolpius' vein'. Within the narrative as adjusted by Lindsay, Encolpius is made to introduce it as a text deriving from Epicurus.

Not from gods' altars or the dominioned air

¹ For a more complete listing see Gareth L. Schmeling and Johanna H. Stuckey, *A Bibliography of Petronius*, Mnemosyne Supplementum 39 (Leiden, 1977).

Come the blown dreams that perch on the mind's boughs
With mocking faces. Each man for himself
Unclops the dream. For when the limbs sleep
In the dark waters of peace, and the mind plays,
No longer bearing the body on its back,
The fugitive dream breaks from the day's thickets

<New page>

Of clumped ideas. He who shakes towns
And sets sad cities tumbling with heaped fire
Beholds swords and broken ranks and dead kings
And black plains oozing stickily with blood.
They whose work is pleading find courts and statutes
And look scared on tribunals closed in by mobs.
The miser hides his money everlastingly,
And digs new gold from sleep. The hunter stirs
The leaves of night with his keen pack of desires.
The sailor steers his ship from beetling death,
Or sees it suddenly ripped. The woman writes
Beseeching letters to an endless lover.
The adultress lifts up the skirt of dreams,
And the dog whimpers on the track of hares –
Sorrow has wounds gnawed on the flesh of sleep.

Alistair Elliot, 2018

Elliot (born 1932) was a professional librarian in London, Keele, Shiraz, and Newcastle. He has produced nine books of verse and as many of translation, including an anthology of *Roman Food Poems* (2003) and translations of Euripides' *Medea* (1993) and *Phaethon* (2008), the latter 'from thin air' since most of the play is missing. These two translations from Petronius, written for the present collection on invitation, have not been published before.

Satyricon, Section 128

As in night-sleep, when visions lead your sight
 Astray, earth's been dug up and brings to light
 Lost gold, dishonest fingers wander over
 The find and snatch the treasures, sweat-drops cover
 And clean your face, a profound fear takes hold)
 Of the sleeping mind: someone (suspecting gold)
 Concealed there) might shake out your garment's heavy fold;)
 But soon, when false delight has drained away
 From the fooled mind, on the return of day
 And the true shape of things, the self goes on)
 Wishing to have the things it lost: it's drawn)
 Back to the dream, the vision – but they're gone.)

* * *

PETRONIUS Poemata 30/31 – a version

The dreams whose flitting shadows tease us
 Don't come from heaven or from Jesus.
 Each of us makes his own, himself.
 The body, laid out on its shelf,
 When occupied by sleep, is tame,
 So the mind's free for its own game,
 Able without that weight to play

In darkness what it acts by day.

A man who's used to knocking down
The ramparts of an enemy town
Or as he burns it shows no pity
For someone else's wretched city,
Will dream of weapons, armies flying,
Fields drowned in blood, and monarchs dying.
Men used to plead a case will blench
Dreaming that plaintiffs crowd the bench.
A miser's burying something rich
And finding gold in that same ditch.
The hunter and his hounds might seem
To shake the woods, but it's a dream.
Tonight the snoring sailor saves
His boat, his living, from the waves –
Or in a storm he thinks is real
Clings drowning to its capsized keel.
The harlot writes her beau some verse,
The false wife sends a gift to hers,
The dog pursues the hare in flight,
The wounded feel their pain all night.