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Petronius Sat. 111.9

By Howard Jacobson, Urbana

At illa ignota consolatione percussa laceravit vehementius pectus. So the reading of the manuscripts. The text is understood or emended in two (or three) different ways.

Some take the words *ignota consolatione* to mean “consolation proffered by a stranger”¹. W. S. Watt considers this impossible², and emends *ignota* to *ignoti*, giving the same sense in straightforward Latin³. But even so the text remains problematic. While Müller and Ehlers think *consolatione percussa laceravit* makes good sense (“Der Trost des Unbekannten erschütterte sie nur, so dass sie ...”), Watt thinks it makes no sense at all and adds *non* before *percussa*.

The Loeb edition of Petronius⁴ retains the reading of the manuscripts and translates, “But she took no notice [?] of his sympathy, struck and tore her breast more violently than ever.” This makes eminently good sense. Taking *percussa* as a middle looking toward *pectus* is fine and indeed may be an echo of the *Aeneid*⁵. The problem, of course, is that *ignota* cannot mean “took no notice” (as the translators themselves recognize). The solution is a simple emendation that produces exactly the desired sense. For *ignota*, read *igno<ra>ta*⁶. This is scarcely more than an easy haplography⁷.

1 E.g. W. Ehlers in K. Müller/W. Ehlers, *Petronius: Satyrica* (Munich 1965) 245.

2 As does R. G. M. Nisbet at *JRS* 52 (1962) 231 (“*ignota* is nonsense”).

3 *C&M* 37 (1986) 181.

4 M. Heseltine/E. H. Warmington, *Petronius* (Cambridge, Mass. 1975) 271–273.

5 4.589, where, as here, *pectus percussa* is followed by the woman’s tearing her hair out.

6 For *ignorare* = “take no notice, disregard, ignore”, see e.g. *Pl. Am.* 1047; *Trin.* 264; *Cic. Brut.* 68; *Verg. Aen.* 5.849.

7 I am indebted to Prof. G. M. Browne for discussing this textual problem with me.