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## THE TESTAMENT OF THE PIGLET

EDWARD CHAMPLIN

THE RECENT EXCAVATIONS at the so-called "Schola Praeconum" in Rome have offered striking confirmation of the literary evidence "that the main meat consumed by the urban population of late Imperial Rome was pork, followed by beef and mutton."<sup>1</sup> An astonishing amount is known about the large-scale organization of the city's pork supply from the Theodosian Code (especially 14.4), and it is clear that almost every part of the ancient pig was put to culinary use. Moreover, while Apicius might concern himself with the proper method of fattening sows' livers, pork was not a dish confined to gourmards, for (in the words of the elder Pliny) there was no commoner animal food consumed in eating-houses, and in the fifth century some 1800 tons of pork were distributed free to the populace of Rome annually.<sup>2</sup> In one way then, pigs were much in the public eye. People considered them to be intelligent animals: Pliny gives examples of their cleverness, and Plutarch's Gryllus was a true philosopher.<sup>3</sup> It would be useful to have a pig's views on the human race, and by unusual good fortune the words of one late antique witness survive, in the last will and testament of M. Grunnius Corocotta (or Marcus Grunter Hyena), the piglet.

The *Testamentum Porcelli* will never win great popularity as a work of literature, with its high spirits, low humour, and bad Latin.<sup>4</sup> In 1860 Mortz Haupt, its first modern editor, railed in elegant Latin against its tasteless and feeble jokes and its ignorance of law and custom, and he returned in the end

<sup>1</sup>G. Barker, "The Animal Bones," 81–91, in D. Whitehouse, G. Barker, R. Reece, and D. Reese, "The Schola Praeconum I: The Coins, Pottery, Lamps and Fauna," *PBSR* 50 (1982) 53–101, at 85.

<sup>2</sup>Pliny *HN* 8.209: *neque alio ex animali numerosior materia ganeae: quinquaginta prope sapores, cum ceteris singuli*. On the public pork distributions: A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (Oxford 1964) 702–703, 1289–91 (the main texts are *CTh* 14.4.10.3 [A.D. 419] and *Nov.* 36.2 [A.D. 452]).

<sup>3</sup>*HN* 8.208; *Mor.* 985d (*Bruta Animalia Ratione Uti*).

<sup>4</sup>For "bad" read: late, unparalleled, or vulgar. First edited by Haupt with very useful, if contemptuous, notes (see his *Opuscula* 2 [Leipzig 1876] 175–183), the text is widely available in F. Buecheler's edition of *Petronii Saturae*<sup>8</sup> (Berlin 1963) at 346–347, which is followed here. A careful commentary on linguistic and historical oddities is provided in N. A. Bott's Zürich dissertation of 1972, *Testamentum Porcelli. Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, and there is a splendid English translation, with legal commentary, by D. Daube in his *Roman Law. Linguistic, Social and Philosophical Aspects* (Edinburgh 1969) 78–81. See also B. Baldwin, "The Testamentum Porcelli," in *Studi in onore di Cesare Sanfilippo* 1 (Milan 1982) 41–52 = his *Studies on Late Roman and Byzantine History, Literature and Language* (Amsterdam 1984) 137–148. The edition by B. Mocchi, *Testamentum Porcelli. Una problematica parodia tardolatina* (Innsbruck 1981), is not available in North America.

with relief from this strange byway to the public road, and from the trifles which had amused the boys of 1050 years earlier to the grave task of teaching today's youth: this worthless testament of a piglet had been preserved by chance where so many illustrious monuments of antiquity were lost.<sup>5</sup> But the *Testamentum Porcelli* is more than a bad joke. As a historical document it is unique, for it is a precious example of schoolboy humour, something that made ancient children laugh, a squib chanted by them in the days of St. Jerome. It is easy to dismiss the humour of Marcus Grunter Hyena as low or tediously self-evident,<sup>6</sup> but that rather misses one important point. The obviousness of the humour begs some difficult questions. Do we (who, for a start, are less familiar with porcine anatomy) understand the text and context in the way that Roman schoolboys understood it? And while congratulating ourselves on seeing the obvious jokes, have we missed those that are not so obvious, that were perhaps even funnier to them? As to its lowness, low humour is no sign of lack of sophistication: to take the obvious parallel, Trimalchio may have been a simple man, Petronius his creator most certainly was not. The following is a solemn attempt to explain a joke.

If we ignore the brief *incipit* and *explicit*, the *Testamentum Porcelli* falls into two distinct parts, the will proper, and an explanatory narrative inserted into it. The will begins "M. Grunnius Corocotta the piglet has made this will. Since I cannot write with my own hand, I have dictated it." Then the narrative: Magirus the cook has summoned to execution the destroyer of the home, the digger-up of the soil, the runaway. The piglet begs for mercy, he is seized by the cook's helpers on the sixteenth day before the *kalendae lucerninae* in the consulship of Clibanatus and Piperatus, and seeing that he must die he pleads for the space of an hour in which to make a will. He then calls for his parents, and the will proper recommences. Specific legacies are left from his rations to his father, his mother, and his sister (all with appropriate porcine names); and general legacies of some twelve parts of his body, from bristles down to toenails, go to large groups of appropriate people. Then a legacy of soup-ladle and pestle to the cook, followed by instructions for a monument with grandiose epitaph and then by instructions for a funeral of sorts. And finally the signatures of seven piggy witnesses.

First, the jokes themselves. Much of the humour is obvious indeed: repetitions, jingles, lots of punny names, comic exaggeration, much double entendre, and a general parody of a standard legal form taken very seriously by the adult world. These have been carefully catalogued by the several commentaries and papers devoted to the piece. But what emerges most forcefully from the philological scholarship is how little we understand, how

<sup>5</sup>Haupt, *op. cit.* 183, 175.

<sup>6</sup>As do, respectively, L. Radermacher, "Beiträge zur Volkskunde aus dem Gebiet der Antike," *SBAW Phil. Hist. Kl.* 187.3 (1918) 37, and G. Anderson, "The Cognomen of M. Grunnius Corocotta: A *dissertatiuncula* on Roast Pig," *AJP* 101 (1980) 57–58.

many words remain obscure in two brief pages of Latin text, how much explication is mere guesswork—and if so much is unclear, we cannot yet say that much of the humour is self-evident.

One example will do. The date given in the testament has remained stubbornly resistant to interpretation, despite much speculation: *sub die XVI kal. lucerninas, ubi abundant cymae, Clibanato et Piperato consulibus*. What are the Kalendae Lucerninae? A convincing answer has only recently been provided, by I. Mariotti. In brief, the kalends of January offered a time for exchange of New Year's gifts, a popular form for such gifts being *lucernae* with their promise of light: *annum novum faustum felicem tibi*. Sixteen days before these (as it were) *kalendae lucerninae* comes December 17th, the first day of the Saturnalia, when the end of autumn was celebrated by the eating of pork, and a good pig was a welcome gift: *iste tibi faciet bona Saturnalia porcus*.<sup>7</sup> Hence the piglet made his will, appropriately on different levels, during the Saturnalia. This date, something painstakingly elicited by modern philology, would surely have been recognized and savoured by the ancient audience with no great difficulty as the appropriate time for a piglet to die, when herbs were plentiful and (to use Daube's translation) Roastingtin and Peppersauce were consuls.

Our only external witness to the existence of the *Testamentum* is St. Jerome. At the very beginning of the preface to book twelve of his commentary on Isaiah,<sup>8</sup> Jerome complains that many people prefer the pleasure of Milesian tales to the difficulty of Plato: for example, while Cicero, who had translated the *Timaeus*, admitted that he could not understand that work, hordes of laughing schoolboys chant the will of Grunnius Corocotta the piglet in their schools.<sup>9</sup> Again, in Jerome's *Contra Rufinum* (1.17) the mob of schoolboys is pictured as chanting Milesian inventions in schools and the testament of the pig shakes their limbs with the laughter of Bessi. In Jerome's mind two things were clear, then: that schoolboys chant these trifles in school and find them tremendously amusing; and that they are on a level—indeed perhaps by him confused—with Milesian tales.

Nowhere does Jerome suggest that the piece was written for schoolboys or by one. The first clue to its nature is provided by its clever, not to say

<sup>7</sup>I. Mariotti, "Kalendae Lucerninae," *RCCM* 20 (1978) 1021–25, with ample documentation. He moreover cites a striking parallel for such a periphrasis (with other references) from Macrobius *Sat.* 1.12.33: *kalendae Iuniae fabariae vulgo vocantur, quia hoc mense adultae fabae divinis rebus adhibentur*.

<sup>8</sup>This and the following passage are quoted by Buecheler *ad loc.* Grunnius became Jerome's standard pseudonym for Rufinus: a list of references at D. S. Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1964) 229, including even (appropriately after his enemy's death) *Grunnianae factionis heredes* (*Comm. in Ezech.*, PL 25.323A). Cf. the dossier of abuse collected by F. Cavallera, *Saint Jerome. Sa vie et son oeuvre* 2 (Louvain 1922) 131–135.

<sup>9</sup>On *grunnire* as the *vox porci* see G. Barabino, "Le 'voces animalium' in Nonio Marcello," *Studi Noniani* 3 (1975) 33–36.

knowledgeable, parody of the law. The text closely follows the standard order of wills (a mixture of law and custom), albeit with some unusual omissions: introduction, individual legacies, general legacies, individual legacy with *fideicommissum*, instructions for monument and for disposition of the body, all followed by the signature of witnesses. The opening is absolutely standard—*M. Grunnius Corocotta porcellus testamentum fecit*—as is the confession of illiteracy, and the usual formula nicely underlines the unusual situation of a pig as testator who, since he cannot write “with his own hand,” is forced to dictate his will. Legacies of *modii* of acorns, wheat, and barley can be paralleled in legal texts, and the mass legacies recall those made (for instance) by the emperor Augustus to the people, the army, and so forth.<sup>10</sup> The legacy to the unmentionable cook can be paralleled in both its language and its intent to insult: *nec nominando coco legato dimitto popiam et pistillum . . . : . . . liget sibi collum de reste*.<sup>11</sup> Soup-ladle and pestle are appropriate, but why is he to carry them around his neck? The reference is surely to a commonplace, the ironic legacy of rope with which the unloved legatee is to hang himself: in one inscription, *clavom et restem sparTEAM ut sibi collum alliget*.<sup>12</sup> Then the monument with epitaph in golden letters giving the pig’s tremendous age at death, 999 and 1/2: again, such instructions are common, and the Rabelaisian age should not deflect the sharpness of the comment, for scores of funerary inscriptions are, like this one, “precise but not accurate.”<sup>13</sup> And finally, a *fideicommissum* with a choice legal pun. The testator’s friends are to care for his body by seasoning it well (*condire*) with nut, pepper, and honey, where in a normal will they would be asked to inter it (*condere*), as in *A te peto Titi, fidei tuae committo uti curam condendi corporis mei suscipias*.<sup>14</sup> In short, the writer of this piece was, if not actually a lawyer, a man of some wit and experience.

The second clue to its nature is its cheerful apparent disregard of the law and custom which with it is so familiar. Obviously both cook and piglet assume that he will be eaten,<sup>15</sup> the piglet intervening only to assure that the

<sup>10</sup>Or compare perhaps the long list of the testator’s friends honoured in the *testamentum Dasumii* with a few pounds of gold or silver each: *FIRA*<sup>2</sup> 3.48. *Modii: ib.* 49.

<sup>11</sup>Commentary by Daube at 80, n. 4. Depending on how the passage is to be punctuated, the pig has carried, or the cook is to carry, these utensils from Theveste to Tergeste.

<sup>12</sup>*CIL* 6.20905 = *CLE* 95 (Rome): not itself a formal legacy, but referring again to the testamentary commonplace of *CIL* 6.12649, *restem et clavom, unde sibi alliget*, and Martial 4.70.

<sup>13</sup>As noted by K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge 1983) 238. Epitaphs for other animals, notably birds, dogs, and horses, are common, but this was until recently the only one for a pig: G. Herrlinger, *Totenklage um Tiere in der antiken Dichtung* (Tübingen 1930) 90–91. Add now the much-loved and widely travelled Dalmatian pig, untimely crushed at Macedonian Edessa, while en route to a phallic festival at Emathia: *BE* 1970.363, 1971.396–398.

<sup>14</sup>A. D’Ors, in his edition of the *Testamentum* in *Supplementos de “Estudios Clásicos”* 3 (1953) 74–83, at 76, with reference to *Dig.* 31.88.1 and 34.4.30.

<sup>15</sup>The cook “Magirus” is thus doubly appropriate: his name means both cook and butcher.

proper characters receive their appropriate portions. Equally obviously, it was quite illegal for a testator to divide his corpse among his legatees, and indeed to prepare it for eating—but that had a neat literary precedent in the conditional legacies attached to another parody of a will, that of Petronius' Eumolpus, whereby all who would receive their legacies must first divide up the testator's body and eat it in public (*Satyricon* 141.2–4). But, moreover, here the author revels in a double illegality, an offence not just against the law of man but against the law of pigs as well. Among the *viscera* bequeathed by Grunnius Corocotta were his *intestina*, his *lumbuli*, his *vesica*, and his *musculi*: sumptuary legislation forbade the consumption of such parts.<sup>16</sup>

Far more serious a breach of the law (since it concerns not just people but property) is the fact that after the perfectly normal *Ille testamentum fecit*, the testator begins with the distribution of legacies: that is, the will is immediately invalid in Roman law for omitting the *heredis institutio*, hence it has been dismissed by philologists as an ignorant joke. But the omission of the heir's name is a sign rather of authorial sophistication than of ignorance, as legal historians have realized. A. D'Ors saw in the testament a codicil of the type written in imitation of a will by sons in power who died before their fathers, a socially recognized custom the form of which became confused with legal wills by the fourth century.<sup>17</sup> However, more recently, D. Daube has demonstrated in detail that the text is in fact a parody of the will of a soldier, and soldiers' wills were of course exempt from almost all legal formalities.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the piglet is disposing of his *peculium castrense* (his father is among the legatees) before being executed for a military crime (such a will is startling but, for soldiers, possible). Like many soldiers he is illiterate and must dictate the document (room for a joke on his inability to write), and he is unmarried (father, mother, and sister appear, but no wife or child).

If we accept that the author of the *Testamentum Porcelli* was neither simple nor ignorant, and that the piglet is a soldier of sorts, the work raises questions quite different from those it has raised before.

<sup>16</sup>Pliny *HN* 8.209 (on the great popularity of pork): *Hinc censoriarum legum paginae, interdictaque cenis abdomina, glandia, testiculi, vulvae, sincipita verrina . . .*

<sup>17</sup>A. D'Ors, "El 'Testamentum Porcelli' y su interés para la historia jurídica," *RIDA*<sup>3</sup> 2 (1955) 219–233. The classic examples are the codicil/wills of the poet Lucan (*Vita*) and of the "filiusfamilias" (*FIRA*<sup>2</sup> 3.56).

<sup>18</sup>Denied without comment by C. A. Forbes and M. S. Ginsburg, "Le testamentum porcelli: une parodie romaine," *RPb*<sup>3</sup> 10 (1936) 171–181, at 178. Bott recognized that the possessions of the piglet could only be *peculium castrense* but concluded that in view of the testator's division of his body that would be "unsinnig" (25)! (One wonders under what circumstances it would be "sinnig.") All of which goes back to Haupt, who wrote (183), apparently in all seriousness, that the piglet, however rude and unlettered, was not excused from the legal formalities by that ignorance which allowed soldiers to do almost anything in their wills legally. For a summary of the law regarding soldiers' wills, see J. B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army* (31 B.C.–A.D. 235) (Oxford 1984) 210–229.

M. Grunnius Corocotta is no ordinary soldier (or pig), he is one about to be executed for his crimes: he is *eversor domi, solivertiator, fugitivus*. He is, in short, a brigand, *latro*, and lest there be any doubt of that, he is given the highly-charged name of Corocotta. The only other Corocotta in antiquity was a Spanish bandit of the time of Augustus, one who was famous enough to win mention in the history of Cassius Dio: Augustus was so angry at the man's success that he offered a huge reward for his capture, but when Corocotta came to him voluntarily the emperor relented and gave the money to the bandit himself (Dio 56.43.3). One might look for the exploits of this brigand to be echoed down the centuries, a legendary Robin Hood idealized by the outcast or the oppressed,<sup>19</sup> but that is unnecessary, for the name itself is the perfect bandit *nom de guerre*, signifying a strange hybrid beast, the offspring (according to Pliny) of a hyena and a lioness, or of a dog and a wolf.<sup>20</sup> In short something part soldier and part scavenger, on the boundary between civilization and wilderness, and living in both.<sup>21</sup>

The figure of Grunnius the piglet can thus be assigned to a world where the distinction between bandit and soldier is not always clear, and indeed perhaps precisely to that period of the later fourth and early fifth centuries when imperial legislation repeatedly connects deserters with brigands.<sup>22</sup> Soldiers acting as bandits are of course familiar in the second, third, and fourth centuries, from the petition of the Scaptoparenes to the misadventures of the Golden Ass, as "increasingly . . . there was little except the sanction of the state that separated the roles of 'regular soldier' and 'mercenary' or *latro*."<sup>23</sup> One of those "who directly crossed the thin line of legitimacy, from being soldiers to being bandits" was the deserter—and this porcine soldier was not only an upsetter of house and soil, he was a runaway. The comic piglet is after all to be executed for his crimes. To say this is not to make a sinister figure out of a joke: it is rather to confirm that, whatever his audience, his creator was a man of considerable sophistication with a point to make.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. a second century Spanish slave Corocuta (*CIL* 2.550, Emerita).

<sup>20</sup>*HN* 8.107 (cf. Solinus 27.26), 8.72. Other references: *TLL* 4.976, s.v. "c(o)rocottas."

<sup>21</sup>Cf. D. C. Braund, "Corocottas: Bandit and Hyena," *LCM* 5 (1980) 13–14. The "brigand" of newly-pacified Augustan Spain might just as easily be seen as a freedom-fighter, or as "a troublesome but powerful local baron:" cf. B. D. Shaw, "Bandits in the Roman Empire," *Past and Present* 105 (1984) 3–52, at 44.

<sup>22</sup>*CTh.* 7.18.7, 7.18.14–15, 7.20.7.

<sup>23</sup>This and the following quotation are from Shaw's analysis, *op. cit.* 26–30. For the extensive material on the soldier as oppressor, see R. MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass. 1963) 84–89; cf. S. Mitchell, "Requisitioned Transport in the Roman Empire: A New Inscription from Pisidia," *JRS* 66 (1976) 106–131, at 114–115. Most striking are the bandits acting, or perceived as acting, like soldiers in the novels of Apuleius or Heliodorus. Apuleius' three robber tales in Book 4 (9–21) of the *Golden Ass*, for instance, depict the robbers' whole organization and thought as military, with references to camp, fortress, cohort, maniple, detachments, scouts, recruits, comrades, generals, battles, sieges, even to faith, virtue, and the military oath (*sacramentum*).

So sophisticated indeed that he should have been familiar with the following passage or something similar to it:

When the lawless and sacrilegious emperors Maximian and Diocletian were in power, it was a custom in those days among the ranks of the soldiers to celebrate each year the notorious festival of Saturn. They considered it a special and appropriate gift, as it were, to Saturn himself to celebrate his feast day as one more sacred than all the other days. For on his feast day each person, accordingly as the lot fell, would perform as it were sacrilege in lieu of a vow; clad in a purple robe, he would go forth in public in the guise and semblance of Saturn with a shameful and immoral reputation among all the people. Swooping down with a band of soldiers with complete license for thirty days he would indulge in wicked and shameful desires and revel in diabolical pleasures. When the thirty days were up the feast of Saturn ended and so, as it were, this vowed celebration of theirs. Then still wearing the royal garb, the man who had performed the usual wicked and licentious games would immediately betake himself before those nameless and despicable idols and there offer himself as a sacrifice by the sword.

This is the preface to the martyrdom of Saint Dasius, a Christian soldier, who is selected to play the role of Saturn and refuses.<sup>24</sup> His comrades throw him into prison and then drag him the next day to the legate Bassus, before whom he proclaims that he is a Christian and refuses to venerate the imperial images. He is tortured and then sentenced to be beheaded on the 20th of November, probably in the year 303, in the legionary city of Durostorum (in Lower Moesia).

As Delehaye easily demonstrated, the martyrdom is not authentic and it is quite separate from the description of the Saturnalia preceding it: the date and source of the peculiar Saturnalian lore are unknown, while the interrogation of Dasius is quite colourless and its details are precisely those not found in authentic ancient *acta*.<sup>25</sup> Even more simply, one might add, the date of November 20th for Dasius' death, confirmed elsewhere, does not fit the preface to the *acta*, for the license described in the first paragraph begins explicitly on Saturn's feast day, that is on December 17th. November 20th does however fit the martyrdom well, being the *dies imperii* of Diocletian.<sup>26</sup>

It follows that, when separated from the inauthentic martyrdom, the strange Saturnalia is not necessarily false. Certainly no other evidence for

<sup>24</sup>Greek text: R. Knopf, G. Krüger, and G. Ruhbach, *Ausgewählte Märtyrerakten*<sup>4</sup> (Tübingen and Leipzig 1965) 91–95. Translation: H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford 1972) 273–279; bibliography at 95 and lxix, respectively.

<sup>25</sup>H. Delehaye, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*<sup>2</sup> (Brussels 1966) 230–235. “Bassus” is dubious: T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass. 1982) 184.

<sup>26</sup>T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981) 22–23. A context for the martyrdom can be given. The great persecuting edict came on 23 February 303, and for his *vicennalia* the following November Diocletian proclaimed an amnesty, with the provision that those in prison must sacrifice: many did not, and were executed.



such a bloodthirsty military celebration of the Saturnalia can be adduced, but (to summarize a long discussion) other scholars have turned for parallels to an ancient Babylonian feast, one which had spread into the eastern empire, with license followed by the sacrifice of a mock king, or to the taunting of Jesus in Mark and Matthew.<sup>27</sup> S. Weinstock concluded from such parallels, and from similarities in the *Acta S. Caesarii*, that the Durostorum festival (with or without Dasius, it is immaterial) must actually have happened in the form handed down, rightly noting that despite its difficulty, ambiguity, and obscurity, there was much real antiquarian learning in the *acta*.

The death of the piglet-fool strikingly coincides with the death of the soldier-king. Despite incongruities (the Dasius *acta* are probably corrupt), both of these strange accounts presume a fourth-century world of a licentious and destructive soldiery, and both show soldiers being executed by their superiors in connection with, of all seemingly light-hearted times, the Saturnalia. Did the author of the *Testamentum Porcelli* know of the Durostorum Saturnalia? Jerome says of the piece's effect on schoolboys: *testamentum suis Bessorum cachinno membra concutiat*. *Bessorum cachinno* could be simply a stereotypical phrase, equivalent to "barbarian laughter," but nothing like it is encountered elsewhere. Or it could be taken to imply that Bessi laughed at the testament.<sup>28</sup> In late antiquity "Bessus" was a general term for all Thracians, and Durostorum in Lower Moesia was well within the Thracian-speaking part of the empire.<sup>29</sup> Needless to say, the great contribution of Thracians to the empire was not elegant Latin but soldiers: *Thracia provincia . . . maximos habens viros et fortes in bello; propter quod et frequenter inde milites tolluntur*.<sup>30</sup>

The appropriateness of Saturnalia for the *Testamentum Porcelli* is obvious, a time not only of sacrifice, communal dining, and gift exchange, but of social inversion, masquerade, and occasional violence.<sup>31</sup> The tale of M. Grunnius Corocotta clearly contains all of these. Herein may lie the cause of some of Jerome's dislike of the piece, for the Saturnalia was condemned by the Christian church in the fourth century, and the *Testamentum* is saturna-

<sup>27</sup>Summarized by H. Leclercq in his article "Dasius," *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 4.1 (1920) 272–283, and by S. Weinstock, "Saturnalien und Neujahrsfest in den Märtyreracten (sic)," *Mullus: Festschrift Theodor Klauser* (Münster 1964, *JfAntundChrist* Erg. Bd 1) 391–400.

<sup>28</sup>Daube, 78 with n. 1, assumes they concocted it, apparently taking *Bessorum* with not *cachinno* but *testamentum suis*.

<sup>29</sup>W. Tomaschek, *Die alten Thraker. Eine ethnologische Untersuchung I. Übersicht der Stämme* (Vienna 1893, *SBAW* 128.4) 72–79; D. Detschew, *Die thrakischen Sprachreste* (Vienna 1957) 57–59 (Bessi), 154–155 (Durostorum).

<sup>30</sup>*Expositio totius mundi et gentium* 50.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. M. Meslin, *La fête des kalendes de janvier dans l'empire romaine. Étude d'un rituel de Nouvel An* (Brussels 1970) 90–93.

lian not only in intent but in effect: schoolboys ignored their Plato to chant it, it excited laughter in wild Thracians.

Yet the *Testamentum Porcelli* is neither soldier's joke nor schoolboy squib, but part of a long satiric tradition, and therein lies the clue to its purpose. Jerome, who was a learned man, equated it with Milesian fables, but this was a moral condemnation of frivolity, not an artistic judgment. Milesian fables were nothing if not sophisticated.

There are sufficient hints of the earlier use of the form of the will at Rome for satirical or polemical purposes, appropriately enough in a document seen by the Romans as the *supremum iudicium*. One of Varro's Menippean satires was the *Testamentum* in which, to judge from the surviving fragments, he mocked a variety of Roman customs, while theatre-goers could enjoy an irreverent mime apparently entitled *Iovis mortui testamentum recitatum*.<sup>32</sup> The notorious informer Fabricius Veiento was convicted under Nero for the scandalous items about senators and priests which he had penned under the title *Codicilli* (Tac. *Ann.* 14.50.1). And closest of all to the *Testamentum Porcelli* is the will of Trimalchio, which fits so well into the gross satire of the great freedman.

Moreover, the piglet's will was to be followed by a great quantity of mediaeval and modern literature which would employ the form of the last will and testament for a variety of literary purposes, serious (lovers' testaments, poets' testaments, folk ballad testaments), and mock (animal, satirical, personally or politically abusive, and again poetical).<sup>33</sup> In particular, the *Testamentum Porcelli* stands as the earliest ancestor of one very popular mediaeval and modern satirical form, the animal-testament. This last has two particular distinguishing features, the wise and often accusatory expression of truths, and the division of the testator's body into legacies appropriate to various human follies: both are clearly present in the will of Grunnius Corocotta.

Is there any reason to think that the *Testamentum Porcelli* had any less serious a satiric purpose than its predecessors and successors? Granted its sophistication, it is fair to assume that the piece was written as more than a congeries of porcine witticisms, that it had some comment to make on human life. If that is so, the only possible target is the semi-barbarous late Roman soldier, as viewed by an educated man. The piglet is a bandit, an attacker of home and soil, a deserter, a coward, obscene, boastful, illiterate,

<sup>32</sup>Varro *fr. ap.* Buecheler nos. 540-543; Tertullian *Apol.* 15.1.

<sup>33</sup>E. C. Perrow, "The Last Will and Testament as a Form of Literature," *Tr. Wisconsin Acad. Sc.* 17 (1914) 682-753; W. H. Rice, *The European Ancestry of Villon's Satirical Testaments* (New York 1941) 37-75; U. Bach, *Das Testament als literarische Form. Versuch einer Gattungsbestimmung auf dem Grunde englischer Texte* (Düsseldorf 1977); *id.*, *Kommentierte Bibliographie englischer literarischer Testamente vom 14. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg 1982) 17-21 (with the above typology).

sharp-tongued, much given to new words, vulgarisms, and rhyme—and very funny. In a compressed and elusive way, Grunnius Corocotta did for the Thracian soldier (or pig) of the fourth century what Trimalchio had done for the Asian freedman of the first. His will may have been chanted in schoolroom or schoolyard, but it was not written by, or for, schoolboys.

The unanswered question is: who wrote it? If we could attach a name to the piece, we might be able to say considerably more about the particular circumstances and the deeper context that prompted the author to write it, as has recently been so strikingly done for another puzzling product of the fourth century, the *Misopogon* of the emperor Julian.<sup>34</sup> Whoever he was, the author was familiar with law and with the Latin of the uneducated, with the Christian Bible<sup>35</sup> and with the semi-barbarous soldiery. One might imagine a Rufinus with a sense of humour, perhaps, or a less righteous Jerome, but the most likely candidate is a humbler scholar, an anonymous schoolmaster of genius.

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<sup>34</sup>M. Gleason, "Festive Satire: Julian's *Misopogon* and the New Year at Antioch," *JRS* 76 (1986) 106–119.

<sup>35</sup>So G. Scarpat, "Una rara accezione di transire nel *Testamentum Porcelli*," *Paideia* 36 (1981) 35–38.