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Presentation

No It is no longer curious, as I already highlight in some of the pages of this book, that today, when it seems that historical and literary studies seem to be more threatened, we live under the *boom* of historical novels that fill bookstores. Since 1980, the year of publication of Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose,* the historical novel has experienced a new golden age. Current times, defined as hybrid times par excellence, have seen the mixture of elements that in previous times would have been incompatible flourish in all the arts. Literature, without going any further, seems to have abandoned the center of traditional aristocratic education to take refuge in hybrid forms where it hibernates camouflaged under bodies that receive other names, but whose germ is found in literary expression: cinema, television, popular song, comic... It is paradoxical that the massive schooling of the inhabitants of Western societies during the 20th century has led, we are told, to their lack of interest in reading, when these citizens, from law schools Engineering students and others rely on books to complete their courses. There has been a shift from the old center occupied by literature within an aristocratic conception of education to a protagonism of literature stripped of its exquisite character of belles lettres. The literary experience, in a broad sense, encompasses much more than it ever encompassed in past eras in the history of humanity, but very far from that aristocratic center that embodies literature for aesthetically well-formed or exquisite spirits.

In the same way, teaching professionals complain about the lack of interest of governments in promoting historical and literary studies at a time when historical novels are so in demand in these colorful and colorful candy stores where they have been

converted book centers; at a time when literature has reached further than ever, including the Internet. Who would have believed just 20 years ago that with the click of a click Virgil's work could unfold before our eyes, as if by magic?

In this displacement of literature from its aristocratic center to a more prosaic coexistence with ordinary mortals, previously reviled literary experiences have been vindicated (such as the pocketbook or the comic) and new ones have been invented, such as the historical detective novel, which today enjoys so much popularity, and which has in Umberto Eco the cause of its success with the already mentioned *The Name of the Rose*.

This small book that the reader has in his hands aims to focus his attention on one of those new genres so disdained by university study plans and demanded by many readers who snoop around bookstores; those middle-class citizens with education, often higher, who seek to have a good time reading a work that also teaches them something. I intend to carry out a vindication of the classics as much as a reading vindication (if we understand that reading is, above all, pleasure and entertainment) of one of the most interesting and curious genres that the new and (relatively) modern detective novel has given. historical: a type of novel that takes place during the times of classical Rome and in which supposed “detectives” solve crimes.

This volume, which I wanted to title *Brief introduction to the Latin detective novel* due to its lack of totalizing pretensions, aims to be a minimal tour of the history of the genre and its authors, but also a commentary on some of its mechanisms and tricks, as well as as a recognition of three novelists: the Americans Steven Saylor and John Maddox Roberts, and the Spanish Joaquín Borrell. In the same way, throughout its pages it tries to be a philological and historical commentary on the recreation that these novelists carry out of classical sources, especially Latin, from which the need to refer directly to literary sources has arisen.

Most of this book is unpublished. The first chapter is a recasting of sources indicated in the relevant place, and comes from the pages of my doctoral thesis, *The Detective Novel with a Classical Roman Theme. Rigor and invention,* directed by Rosa María Iglesias Montiel and defended at the University

of Murcia in October 2005. Other parts have been read at some conferences and have seen the light in various publications, but here they are presented expanded and aimed at a less specialized reading public.

Thus, the chapter titled “The Valencian Renaissance of the Latin Detective Novel” was read within the XII Spanish Congress of Classical Studies, held in Valencia from October 22 to 26, 2007; “Fantastic Greek beings for an interpretation of the history of Rome” was published as number 54 of the *Avances* collection (UACJ, October 2004); “The Appian Way, home of the dead,” appeared for the first time in *Revista Digital Universitaria* 8, vol. 7 (UNAM, Mexico, August 2006); “Physiology of Ancient Taste” was first published as “Culinary Luxury in the Classical Roman-Themed Detective Novel: Examples in the Work of John Maddox Roberts and Steven Saylor”; and a shorter version was published in Sara Poot Herrera (ed.) (2003), “En gustos se comen genres.” *Proceedings of the I International Congress of Food and Literature.* Volume I. Mérida: Institute of Culture of Yucat

Various sources have had to be used in both Latin and English and Spanish. The translations from English correspond, most of the time, to the translators of each novel or volume analyzed, and each of these translators is given credit in the final bibliography. On other occasions, as there is no translation of the original English version, the translation is mine. The translations of all the Latin texts cited are also my authorship, but in this case I have thought it appropriate to reproduce, generally in a footnote, the original Latin text. The reader who is not familiar with this language, or who does not want to be entertained by these passages, may skip them at will. On the contrary, those who wish to compare Latin quotations in the original language, which is essential in certain cases for a complete understanding of what is being talked about, will not have to bother looking for Latin editions of classical authors to satisfy their curio

Finally, I must indicate that the novels analyzed are cited mainly following an abbreviated reference system where author, novel and page are recorded. Its operation is attested to on the first page in the general bibliography, which the reader can find at the end of this book.

Ciudad Juárez, April 17, 2008

The Latin detective novel in its double context:

historical novel and detective novel

CHAPTER 1

A definition of the subgenre

Between 2001 and 2005 I dedicated myself to reading and studying, mainly
Particularly, the novelistic work of Steven Saylor and John Maddox Roberts, two contemporary American authors poremos whose production falls within the subgenre of the detective novel with a classical Roman theme. The final result was my doctoral thesis on these authors and this topic.

During those four years of work, when I told a wide variety of people about the topic of my doctoral thesis, I generally received two types of reactions. The first of them, corresponding to those unfamiliar with classical themes, consisted of asking me with surprise (not without a certain enthusiasm) if detective novels already existed in the Roman era; The second reaction, which always came from the university professor usually linked to the field of classical philology, consisted of the adoption of a histrionic silence in the face of what he had just heard. The qualified teacher must have been wondering at that precise moment what exactly I was talking about, since during Greco-Latin antiquity, as everyone should know, detective novels did not exist (nor cou

Indeed, in both cases I found the same result: the vast majority of qualified university professors (even those belonging to the field of study of classical philology) knew the same thing about the subject as the average more or less educated citizen: nothing. absolutely. In certain cases I was forced to explain that “when the Romans” did not exist detective novels, but now there are authors who write such novels set in Greco-Latin antiquity; The topic of our thesis was, precisely, to study two authors who in a more systematic way are developing a saga that takes place during the distant and turbulent days of the end of the Republic of Rome, known precisely as the period

classic of Roman history. I remember the case of a literature professor at the UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico) who, very surprised by my thesis topic, asked me with a certain tone of sarcasm if there was some kind of police subplot in the *Satiricón .* Indeed, there is no such thing, but without the existence of Petronio's *Satyricon ,* the picaresque novel or, in more recent times, the crime novel would most likely never have existed. Both in the delicious work of Petronio and in the picaresque and in the crime novel there are notable coincidences of approach and style that force us to remember the old maxim of Lucretius in *De rerum natura* II 284: “Nothing is born from noth In the same way, all contemporary literature is a child of tradition and is not born from nothing *(De nihilo quoniam fieri nihil posse videmus).*

This lack of knowledge did not surprise me at all, nor is there anything abnormal about it. The popular genres of the 20th century are just now climbing the pulpits of the great universities. Neither the average citizen is therefore uneducated, nor does the university professor neglect the updating of his field of study by not knowing that there are detective novels with classical Roman themes. Despite the growing fame of Lindsey Davis, who has become the most established author in the field, the subgenre of the historical detective novel with Roman themes (classical and postclassical) is relatively little known, since it is recently created in time (we will address the chronological aspect later). Since it is a subgenre of detective fiction that does not yet have a single century of history, many of its great masters may still be yet to come. Today, the complexes with which detective narratives were generally viewed have been overcome, a product, in general, of the brilliant but restricted concept with which the detective narrative itself emerged from the pen of Edgar Allan Poe, where the resolution of the crime was nothing but an intellectual game for a mastermind, who entertained himself in deciphering the mystery of a murder without delving deeper than it. The long years of consolidation of the criminal narrative and all the variants that have been possible by transcending the problem novel and even the crime novel itself, as society has changed, have turned the detective novel into a literary genre that does not he only cares, in a cold and dilettante way, about finding out who

was the murderer *(whodunnit),* but also what the causes were *(whydunnit)* and how it was carried out *(howdunnit).* Today, the detective novel is not a minor genre in itself: the greatness or mediocrity of its works is determined by the greatness of theme, approach and style of its authors, or by their smallness. This is why I refuse to approach this subgenre of the historical detective novel as if it were a negligible genre; I am aware that the greatest greatness of its literature is yet to come and no genre of literature (or subgenre) is insignificant or negligible by itself.

The authors studied during my doctoral thesis, Steven Saylor and John Maddox Roberts, belong to the subgenre of historical detective novels with classical Roman themes. I must specify here and now, to avoid misunderstandings in the future, that I am going to use the word “subgenre”, not in its pejorative meaning (which is compared to by-product), but because the detective novel developed by these authors belongs to a branch of a genre of the novel, the detective novel, which in turn could be divided into historical and non-historical. Of course there are many other subdivisions within the detective novel, but these do not concern this work on historical detective novels now. In this last case we are talking about authors who write historical detective novels and the period they cover in their novels corresponds to the so-called classical period of the history of Rome, and specifically, the one that covers the end of the Republic or Ciceronian period. , since it runs from the birth of the speaker until his death. For this reason, Maddox Roberts and Saylor write historical detective novels with classical Roman themes, just as Lindsey Davis writes detective novels with post-classical Roman themes. To avoid further ambiguities for the reader who is unaware of this branch of historical detective novel, we added the concept “thematic” to avoid confusion when speaking inappropriately with imprecise labels such as “Roman detective novel”, “Roman detective novel” or other variants. that could lead anyone readi
Examples of this confusion would be: 1) that all detective novels “about Romans” are those starring Romans from Antiquity, and not by contemporary Romans or from the last century (the Italian detective novel, known as *giallo,* has long been trajectory and fertility); 2) that in classical Rome there were

detective novels. To avoid these and other possible confusions, I define the subgenre here as "crime novel with a classical Roman theme."

2. The Roman-themed detective novel in the context of historical narrative and criminal novel

Having defined the subgenre, therefore, we must now place it within the history of the genre, but here we come across the following peculiarity: the historical detective novel is a hybrid genre between the conventions of the detective novel, on the one hand, and the historical novel, on the other;1 specifically, the subgenre of this, called Latin historical novel, which in recent years has achieved notable strength.2 It is a subgenre that belongs, therefore, to two major genres with identical letter of authenticity. In this characteristic the subgenre demonstrates its modernity, since our time is increasingly characterized by hybridity, the mixture of dissimilar elements that until now seemed irreconcilable. In this regard, it has even been written that the historical novel experiences boom times in periods of crisis, as Carlos Mata Induráin does in his Presentation to the book *The historical novel, theory and comments:* "Times of political, philosophical and religious crisis usually be the times in which the historical novel experiences notable cultivation and popularity."3 Let us begin by locatin

1 Detective novels and historical novels are also the two most popular genres among the average reader in some countries like Spain. Thus, the novelist José María Guelbenzu is forceful in this regard: "The statistics have spoken clearly: almost three quarters of book readers in our country lean towards the novel and, of them, the majority opt for historical books and of mystery or intrigue. Cf. José María Guelbenzu (November 16, 2004). "Mystery on order", in *El País.*

2 Enrique Montero Cartelle and Mª Cruz Herrero Ingelmo (1994). *From Virgilio to Umberto Eco: the contemporary Latin historical novel.* Madrid: Ediciones Orto and University of Huelva, p. 9: "This current presence of the Latin world that we study is limited to approximately the last fifty years. In truth, there has never been a greater flourishing of the Latin historical novel, which demonstrates an unparalleled interest in this subject while showing a notable variety of forms compared to other previous eras."

3 Kurt Spang, Ignacio Arellano and Carlos Mata (eds.) (1995), *The historical novel, theory and comments.* Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra [Anejos de Rilce, 15, Series "Research notes on literary genres", 2], p. 9. Later (p. 25), Carlos Mata exemplifies what these times of crisis have been in which

framework of the historical novel. With respect to this genre, the historical detective novel comes to curl the curl of the artifice that constitutes the historical novel, a genre with numerous followers and also detractors. Let's begin by defining the historical novel in the words of Nicasio Salvador Miguel, professor of medieval Spanish literature, who highlights the first difficulty that the genre has to successfully overcome: the fact that history and novel are, in principle, antithetical concepts. I quote the most interesting fragment of his statements to a Madrid newspaper where I first give the floor to the editor of the chronicle:4

> While the novel is a timeless fiction whose purpose is to entertain, history is a truth from the past that seeks to instruct. Given this premise, Salvador says that it is logical that some critics maintain that the historical novel does not exist or that, on the contrary, others affirm that every novel is historical. But since the label exists, what traits define a genuine historical novel? “Above all, it must be a work of fiction and imagination,” Salvador specifies, “that is set in a historical background of certain guarantee, that is not the result of a few poorly put together brushstrokes,” he adds, and concludes, “in which the characters, whether invented or historical, develop with verisimilitude.”

Nicasio Salvador's words open the door to several comments. That some critics affirm the fact that the historical novel does not exist in itself, since every novel is historical, is interesting. It is true that almost all novels

The historical novel has gained popularity: “After this boom in the 19th century, the historical novel has continued to be cultivated in times of great historical crises: in the first decades of the 20th century in Spain; in interwar Europe and, especially, in Germany in the 1930s; after World War II in central Europe, due to Soviet influence or, finally, in the 50s and 60s in Spain after the fatigue produced by the social novel.

4 Juan J. Gómez (August 2, 2000), “The historical novel, a successful mixed bag,” in *El País.* Another approach to a definition of the historical genre is found in Kurt Spang: “Retrospective on the evolution of the historical novel”; in Spang, Arellano, Mata, *op.cit.,* pp. 15-6: “The most evident characteristic is that all the novels mentioned, so different from each other, place their action (fictitious, invented) in a more or less distant past (real, historical) [...] For a novel to be truly "Historical history must reconstruct, or at least attempt to reconstruct, the period in which its action is situated."

They are historical,5 since they take place during a period of history, whether this is the republican period of ancient Rome or our own era, which also has a passage in time and history. However, most scholars of this genre have specified that for a novel to be considered historical it must have been written with a time difference of at least fifty years from what is narrated.6 Regarding this topic, Three forms of construction of the historical novel have been pointed out with respect to the past that is narrated. Specifically, J.I.

Ferreras, in *The Novel in the 17th Century,* distinguishes between the archaeological novel (which reconstructs a past remote in time); the one that goes back to the generation of grandparents; and, finally, the one that deals with contemporary or very present historical news, in a non-immediate sense.7 To this last classification, Carlos Mata introduces an interesting distinction between "historical novel" and "contemporary national episode", "reserving this term for those works that do not move their action too far in time, that is, for those that fictionalize historical events experienced—or that could have been experienced—by the author."8 The label of this type of novel, contemporary national episode, Mata takes it from the five series of *National Episodes,* by Benito Pérez Galdós.

The supposed antithesis between novel and history (timeless fiction whose purpose is to entertain *versus* truth of the past that seeks to instruct, in the words of Nicasio Salvador) turned out to be the first controversy raised by the genre after its birth in the 19th century. This controversy could be summarized more or less like this: if it is a novel, it is not history; If it is history, it is not a novel. It was not, by any means, a concern born with modernity, since it was already

5 Naturally, here we should leave out of consideration the literature of the absurd and other types of works that do not aim to reflect a society or its inhabitants at a specific time. Despite everything, in a supposedly timeless and anti-historical work the authors pour the concerns due to their time into their themes, approaches and characters. A particularly ahistorical genre that, however, profusely recreates a multitude of elements from the medieval past, is that of heroic fantasy.

6 Thus, B. Ciplijauskaité (1981), *The nineties and history.* Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas, p. 13.

7 JI Ferreras (1987), *The novel in the 17th century.* Madrid: Taurus, pp. 56-7.

8 Carlos Mata, in Spang, Arellano, Mata (eds.), *op. cit.,* p. 19.

echoes Aristotle in his *Poetics,* when he explains to us that, since the poet is an imitator, he must imitate one of three things: things as they were and are, things as they seem or say they are, or as they should be. .9

Perhaps it would not hurt to make a very tight synthesis here of the trajectory of the historical novel, following Amado Alonso in his now classic essay on the genre.10

1) Predecessors of Walter Scott.11 They are as varied and remote as Xenophon's *Cyropedia* or Chariton's *The Works of Quereas and Calírroe* . In the case of the first, we have something very similar to the fictionalized biographies of our time, with scenes of great exoticism and color; In the case of the second, we find a Byzantine-type novel where the author placed fictional characters in a historical context, even allowing himself to show them in connection with historical figures in the manner, for example, of the novels of Alexander Dumas. In classical Latin literature itself we have the case of the invention of the poetic-historical genre, with Lucan and his *Pharsalia.* [12] Among the novels closest in time that could be counted among these antecedents we could mention, for example, *El bandolero,* by Tirso de Molina.13

2) Walter Scott and the emergence of the historical novel. His novel Ivanhoe (1819) marked the birth of the modern historical novel and its success was spectacular, so much so that it set the standard for all its imitators to follow, to the point that since the time of Lope de Vega there had not been a case of literary fame

9 About this Aristotelian distinction, cf. *Poetics,* 1451a. 36-1451b. 12.

10 Amado Alonso (1984), *Essay on the historical novel. Modernism in The Glory of Don Ramiro.* Madrid: Gredos [Hispanic Romanesque Library, 338].

11 Cf. also Spang, Arellano, Mata, *op. cit.,* pp. 21-23.

12 Which received a certain ironic treatment from Petronius in *Sat.* 118: “The deeds should not be enclosed in verses, since they are told much better by historians” *(Non enim res gestae versibus comprehendae sunt, quod longe melius historici faciunt).* Since ancient times, then, we have seen the controversial split or apparent dispute between poetry and history.

13 Cf. Miguel Zugasti, *“El banditero* de Tirso de Molina: historical novel with a hagiographic theme. Notes for the study of gender in the Baroque. In Spang, Arellano, Mata (eds.), *op. cit.,* pp. 115-44.

so extensive and impressive.14 Scott's style, readily imitated, is summarized by Amado Alonso in op. cit., p. 32:

> Historical information, local color, exoticism; attention to the exterior, sacrificing something of the interior; evocation of distant civilizations and different or disappeared societies, presenting the past as outdated; feelings not individual, but generic of the community and representative; types, not individuals; The central story, unlike in tragedy and epic, is invented. (The archaeological side of the story.) In addition, the very art of Walter Scott's novel, with his way of presenting events, the dialogues, a certain regime in the composition of the "good" and "bad" characters, and, Above all, the resources to excite, maintain and satisfy the reader's curiosity were instantly adopted by all the other novelists in the world.

3) Lastly, and transcending the style of Walter Scott, we have the archaeological novel of the 19th century. The successive criticisms of Scott's style,15 who was not a model of fidelity or historical rigor, led Gustave Flaubert to extreme Scott's style to the maximum in *Salammbó* (1862), a watershed of the new style of historical novel. Amado Alonso explains it in op. cit., p. 72:

> Flaubert took the historical novel to its ultimate limit, and thereby established a new type that provoked imitations in all literatures. This new type of historical novel did not consist so much of new characters as of the extremeness of those that Walter Scott set for it: on the one hand, Flaubert extremes the rigor of the documentation, contrasting each detail with the patient wisdom of a scholar;

14 To know the influence of Scott on the European literature of the time and to learn about the name and work of his followers, cf. Amado Alonso, *op. cit.,* pp. 32-41.

15 Amado Alonso summarizes them in *op. cit.,* p. 42: “Despite such overwhelming and universal success, the historical novel has been in crisis almost since its birth. In England, scholars could easily point out historically false situations in Walter Scott. This is how the intimate conflict between the historical and the invented is posed from the beginning in these novels. But in this we must consider less clumsiness of execution and mistakes than intentional deformations: Walter Scott used to condense several decades into a few years and deliberately illuminated and colored the crudeness and barbarity of historical events. And like Walter Scott, all his henchmen reserve a margin of infidelity for the free exercise of fantasy.”

> On the other hand, he extremes the artistic form of exhibition, surrendering himself to virtuoso refinements. To make things even more extreme, he chooses an extraordinarily difficult subject, the painting of the Carthaginian civilization, very distant and very poorly known, barely suspectable by fragmentary references. Brag about the difficulty of the enterprise, brag about artistic achievement.

Having made this synthesis, clearly very incomplete but necessary, I now return to the topic, pointed out by Nicasio Salvador, of the opposition between novel (invention) and history (truth) and the apparent artificiality that arises from the mixture of both. Amado Alonso, in his now classic essay on the historical novel, dedicates many pages to this apparent conflict that is not such. Alonso terminologically establishes the opposition between poetry (creation) and history, and asks on page 8 why they seem to be in conflict: “Couldn't there be a brilliant poetic vitalization of strictly historical material? I think so". His answer, which is ours, is based on the exemplification of *The Song of Mío Cid* (a poetic work, but documented and much more faithful to reality than the texts of the Arthurian cycle or *La Chanson de Roland)* and the work of Shakespeare, and develops his argument on page 10:

> The fact that Shakespeare adhered to the news transmitted by Plutarch has not prevented his *Coriolanus,* his *Julius Caesar* and his *Antony and Cleopatra* from being wonderful poetic creations. Certainly, the great tragic and epic works do not enjoy the perennial privilege of

16 In this regard, it is known that Flaubert's correspondence is one of the most impressive testimonies that exist about the literary task. In Spain we do not have a complete edition of his correspondence, but we do have a valuable volume (despite its numerous editing errors) that compiles many of the passages that the genius wrote about this task: Gustave Flaubert (selection, prologue and translation by Cecilia Yepes, 1998), *On literary creation. Extracts from the correspondence.* Madrid: Editions and Creative Writing Workshops Fuentetaja [The Writer's Office, 2]. On page 189 we read a lament very typical of the author of *Madame Bovary:* “How many sacrifices does the smallest of sentences cost!” The book has a chapter dedicated to the elaboration of *Salammbó,* for the writing of which Flaubert resorted to exhaustive and unusual documentation for the time: “Do you know how many volumes I have ingested about Carthage? About a hundred! and in fifteen days I have just swallowed the eighteen volumes of Cahen's Bible! With notes and taking notes!” (Letter to Jules Dutplan, *circa* July 22, 1857, p. 177).

fertilize the human heart for having reconstructed a past time with art, but because, in a time that barely excludes other times, in an environment made of nothing more than the vital atmosphere of its heroes, they forged human lives of high tension, singular souls. inhabitants of singular bodies, where the forces of life are presented with sobering clarity. In works such as those cited by Shakespeare, or *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus, or *Phaedra*

of Racine, archaeological fidelity or anachronism hardly enters into account.

Neither Shakespeare nor the authors of the Golden Ages in Spain (think of the historical and mythological dramas of Lope or Calderón) were interested in carrying out an archaeological reconstruction of the time in which the actions took place or should have taken place.17 Perhaps the most extreme case is that of the sacramental autos with a mythological theme written by Calderón, where, as in *The Divine Jasón,* those legendary characters undergo a cultural metamorphosis that may seem aberrant to us, not to mention that their language and reasoning They are those of their authors' own time. The same painting from that time presents us with this same desire for contemporization instead of reconstruction, as is the case, to give just one example, in the Velazquez work *La fragua de Vulcano.* Amado Alonso himself expresses with singular precision (in *op. cit.,* p. 11) that these poets did not care about reconstructing the appropriate archaeological environment, since this was not part of their objectives: “The tragics were attracted to history as a personal act, as a biography and as a trajectory of exemplary destinies, not as the depersonalized cultural humus that results from the crushing of millions of anonymous lives.” History and poetry are not, therefore, at odds in the history of literature, although this may lead the ancient author to incur ana Regarding this point, Alejandro's response is very famous

17 Amado Alonso, in *op. cit.,* p. 14, distinguishes between archaeological and historical anachronism with an example: “The actors in Shakespeare's Roman tragedies who greeted each other in the English manner of the 17th century committed archaeological but not historical anachronism, in the sense that we here strive to discern. The historical is the greeting, the archaeological is the formula used in it.” We will find several archaeological anachronisms of this kind in the Latin detective novel.

Dumas when he was accused of violating history: “I violate it, it is true, but I make beautiful creatures for it.”18

The problem of verisimilitude, also mentioned by Salvador, is the one put forward most forcefully by the detractors of the historical novel, and the specialized critics that until now have dealt with detective novels with Roman themes have mentioned it again and again. time. However, it is not the historical anachronism that critics most repudiate, since today the modern novelist is usually well documented about the era in which his works are set, but rather mental and cultural anachronism, as stated by Montero Cartelle and Herrero Ingelmo. in his work on the historical novel:19

> The author can even play with anachronism, as is the case with Thorton Wilder [...] However, these are not the most dangerous anachronisms against the integrity of the novel. There is another type that is much more corrosive because it is insidious and difficult to detect. We are referring to mental or cultural anachronism, which occurs when, despite the Latin historical framework, the characters have attitudes, behaviors, ways of thinking and acting that correspond to the novelist's time and not to the historical past. This was customary in the 17th and 18th centuries, but is also found in current Latin novels. The most striking example is that of the detectives in historical novels set in Rome, who act like the detectives in current television series: this is the case with Marco Didio Falco, the hero of Lindsey Davis's novels. Since it is something obvious, since it is a pure game, the reader accepts it.

Thus, today the writer of historical novels, whether they are detective novels or not, must balance like a tightrope walker with respect to two problems that can turn against him and ruin his creation: the management of sources so that they allow him to speak with knowledge of the facts of a time and of some characters, and the free use of an imagination that does not incur anachronisms. As we see, the modern author seems to have less poetic freedom to recreate the past than in Shakespeare's time.

18 Cited in Spang, Arellano, Mata (eds.), *op.cit.,* p. Four. Five

19 Montero Cartelle-Herrero Ingelmo, *op. cit.,* pp. 26-27.

Peare, because on the one hand he must know the sources much better, and on the other hand he must try not to incur anachronisms, unless his work is born with the objective of being clearly anti-historical (which there are also some). The Latin novel has had a great boom in the last fifty years, and in this same period the best detective novel has achieved the status of great literature, regardless of the genre label. Before entering into the crime novel, we are going to place the historical detective novel within the framework of the historical novel. We are going to do it following, above all, the typology of the contemporary Latin novel established by Montero Cartelle and Herrero Ingelmo in their work on the historical novel.20 According to these authors, the contemporary Latin novel presents these subdivisions:

1) Biographical novel. Its characteristic feature is the choice of a character as the center of the plot. It can be apologetic or aggressive and frequently takes on the tone of a thesis novel. The most used technical procedure is that of the fiction of memoirs, diaries or letters. Examples: *I, Claudius* and *Claudius the god and his wife Messalina* (1934), by Robert Graves; *The Iron Pillar* (1965), by Taylor Caldwell; *The Young Caesar* (1958) and *Imperial Caesar* (1960), by Rex Warner; *The Ides of March* (1948), by Thornton Wilder; *Hannibal* (1989), by Gisbert Haefs.

2) Antihistorical biographical novel. It coincides with the previous one in the choice of a character for the purpose of the thesis, but the author takes all the liberties of images and poetic associations in order to enhance the forcefulness of his proposal. Example: *Super-Heliogábalus* (1969), by Alberto Arbasino.

   With respect to the differentiation between biographical novel and historical biography, Montero Cartelle and Herrero Ingelmo state21 that we recognize the biographical novel by “the maintenance of the narrative in past historical times and times, without appealing at any time to extra-temporal data or of a more modern setting. If you resort to those

20 Montero Cartelle-Herrero Ingelmo, *op. cit.,* pp. 41-181.

21 *Ibid.,* p. 98.

historical, philological, linguistic data, etc., breaking the scenic and temporal illusion, we will have a biography, which is a subgenre of history. In this sense, whether the biography is novelized or not is secondary."22

The authors use Philip Vandenberg's *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1986) as an example of a biography because "it appeals to the testimony of later historians, uses later writers of the time, refers to later times such as the Middle Ages, and phrases and phrases constantly appear. judgments of the author of the biography himself, expressing his opinion on the historical facts."23

3) Analytical novel. As if it were a serial, they present the events year by year in the manner of ancient analysis.
Examples: *The First Man in Rome* (1990), *The Crown of Grass* (1991) and *The Rising Sun,* by Colleen McCullough.

4) Philosophical-theological novel. Autobiographical story of philosophical orientation that expresses intellectual stages in the search for truth. *Memoirs of Hadrian* (1951), by Marguerite Yourcenar; *Julian the Apostate* (1964), by Gore Vidal.

5) Literary biographical novel. The experiences of poets are collected based on the documentation provided by the writer himself through the filter of poetry. *Properce ou les amants de Tibur* (1927-1928), by Julien Benda; *The Death of Virgil* (1958), by Herman Broch.

6) Politicized biographical novel. Use of a character or historical situation to analyze it with a previously accepted doctrine, resulting in an ideologized or politicized novel. *The Gladiators* (1939), by Arthur Koestler; *The Business of Mr. Julius Caesar,* by Bertolt Brecht.

7) Christian novel. Favorable or not to Christianity, it began in the 19th century. *Nerópolis* (1984), by Hubert Monteilhet; *Doctor of Body and Soul* (1959), by Taylor Caldwell.

22 This seems universally accepted. Thus, Spang, in *op.cit.,* p. 67, denies the existence of fictionalized history as a literary genre: "The so-called fictionalized history, a copy of the French *histoire romancée,* does not constitute, in my view, a literary genre, given that it is a kind of popular historiography, currently very in vogue; Its authors use narrativization resources to present historical characters and/or episodes to a wide audience […] That is, in most cases the fictional element, essential in the historical novel, is missing."

23 Montero Cartelle-Herrero Ingelmo, *op.cit.,* p. 99.

8) Pedagogical novels. Written by teachers for the training and delight of their students or the general reading public, they are always conditioned by the purpose and level of knowledge they seek. *Ash Laurels* (1984), by Norbert Rouland.

9) Detective novel. The authors affirm that this type of novel is a "transposition to Rome of the crime genre" (p. 175), and in this use of the word "transposition" they highlight something very important to which we will return later: the fact that this type of novel is more detective than historical without ceasing to be neither of the two.

Among the pages mentioned, Montero Cartelle and Herrero Ingelmo comment on *El Pompeiano,* by Philipp Vandenberg; *Il sale in bocca* (1990) and *La statua d'oro* (1984), by Rosario Magrí; *Mors tua* (1990) by Comastri Montanari; *The Silver of Britain* (1989), *The Bronze Statue* (1990) and *The Copper Venus* (1992) by Lindsey Davis. In the end, before finishing with the mention of *Nights of Rome,* by Ron Burns (1991), they dedicate more space to commenting on the two novels that Joaquín Borrell dedicated to his discontinued character Diomedes the exquiriente, where they stand out "as a norm in the detective novel set in Rome, the humor traits wisely distributed throughout the work" (p. 180) putting it in relation to the aforementioned "traditional British humor" (p. 179) of Davis's novels. Finally, they will dedicate a brief paragraph to the first two novels of *Roma sub Rosa: Roman Blood* and *The Arm of Justice,* (Steven Saylor), whose Gordian the Hound they explain to us is set "in the middle of the Ciceronian era with all the characteristic ingredients of American television series" (p. 181). The general comment about all these novels is that the action could have happened at any time and place, so only the setting is historical (p. 177) and Lindsey Davis's comment is lapidary, taking into account above all that it is the best-selling and best-known author of the genre: "The Roman world, clichéd and unreal, is only used as the background of the novel, but totally blurred and without personality.

The police action could have taken place in any other place and time" (p. 178).

I think that this last opinion, although it can be applied to many novels of this type, must be qualified, since since 1994 (date of publication of the book in question) until today many authors and novels have appeared whose action could only have taken place in the Roman world. On the other hand, although it is true that numerous authors resort to humor to season their detective stories (Lindsey Davis, John Maddox Roberts, Marilyn Todd), it is in no way a sine qua non characteristic of the subgenre, since except for specific and isolated comments biting, is not one of the style traits of, for example, Steven Saylor.

It is also true that sometimes these literary artifacts show the artificiality of a setting that is truly unrelated to a police case that could have happened in another era, but in that case the novels *The Sacrilege,* by Maddox Roberts, or the almost complete series *Roma* would be impossible. *sub Rosa,* by Steven Saylor, which are absolutely linked to the political problems of the Rome of his time.

Although we must consider the work of Montero Cartelle and Herrero Ingelmo as the most important dedicated, until now, to the analysis of the Latin historical novel, we cannot help but echo another work that came to be prepared at the same time as this one, but that It didn't see the light until a year later. I am referring to *The Novelized Antiquity,* by Carlos García Gual.24 García Gual's book, prepared at the same time as that of Montero Cartelle-Herrero Ingelmo and published immediately after, is not as exhaustive as the first (it covers not only Roman antiquity , as in Montero, but also the Greek one), and focuses on fewer works, also having the disadvantage of lacking a bibliographic apparatus. Its greatest incentive (or disadvantage, depending on how you look at it) is that García Gual further synthesizes the subgenres of the historical novel in the chapter “Overview of the 20th century and brief typology” (pp. 211-236). The typology of the historical novel proposed by García Gual is the following:

1) Mythological novels or novels with a mythical theme. The plot is a story based on a classic myth. *The Golden Fleece,* by Robert Graves (1945); *Medea,* by Christa Wolf.

24 Carlos García Gual (1995), *Romantic Antiquity: historical novels about the Greek and Roman world.* Barcelona: Anagrama [Arguments, 165].

2) Fictional biography. The already mentioned novels about Claudio, due to Robert Graves; the *Memoirs of Hadrian,* by Yourcenar; *Memoirs of Agrippina* (1992), by Pierre Grimal, etc.

3) Novels with a great historical horizon. The setting itself is fundamental and the novelist strives to recreate a historical fresco with a broad perspective. *Creation* (1981), by Gore Vidal; *Nerópolis* (1984), by Monteilhet; *The First Man in Rome,* by Carson McCollough; and following in this series.

4) Love and adventure novels. Old romantic scheme, with hard love and a happy ending, or the opposite. Examples of the first type would be the well-known and already cited *The Last Days of Pompeii, Ben-Hur* or *Quo Vadis?* Examples of the second type turn out to be *The Pompeian,* by Philip Vandenberg or *Ash Laurels,* by N. Rouland (1984).

5) Intrigue novels. García Gual also highlights the novelty of the subgenre and then points out that the old is the framework of action, while the action is similar to that of any other detective novel, especially a crime novel. He exemplifies the genre with Lindsey Davis, and thinks of his protagonist Falco that "he is a kind of Philip Marlowe in Vespasian's Rome" (p. 233). Thus, García Gual coincides in this aspect with Montero Cartelle-Herrero Ingelmo, although García Gual's references are minor, since we already see that she exemplifies taking Lindsey Davis as an example, undoubtedly the best-known author outside and inside Spain, but he does not mention Saylor or Todd or David Wishart, to give three examples. For García Gual, the immediate reference for the composition of these narratives is the crime novel, as he explains on pages 235-236, without forgetting to mention two antecedents of the historical detective novel (to whom we will return) and Umberto Eco, whose The *Name de la rosa* is no stranger to the current success of this type of novel:

> These novels reflect, I think, a modern vision of ancient society in which they discover the same vices and characters as in our environment. The intrigues of detective novels—which are typical of an urban and disenchanted mythology, and I am referring, of course, to those of the so-called black series—are already found in the Roman world […]

> In some way, these somewhat carnival plots have their precedent in the novels of Judge Ti, invented by R. Van Gulik - with a dozen curious cases in tow - or those of the detective monk by Ellis Peters, another novelist of sharp wit, set in the early Middle Ages. And we can also cite the skillful plot of the astute U. Eco in *The Name of the Rose,* with its parody winks and its medieval setting.

This is the generic context in which the detective novel with a classical Roman theme is found within the historical novel. It is a genre, the police genre, somewhat cornered by critics, as we see. Except for the resounding success of *The Name of the Rose,* and the memory of the popular series by Van Gulik and Ellis Peters—mentioned by García Gual—the subgenre does not have the academic reputation and prestige of the main authors of the problem novel. and the crime novel. Before settling the main question to define once and for all the predominant nature of this type of works—are they historical detective novels or historical detective novels? —we must locate the subgenre again, but this time within the framework of the police or criminal narrative.

The historical detective novel (whether or not it has a Roman theme) is not as old as the main works of the problem novel and even the crime novel, but its great success is certainly very recent, since it has benefited from the hybrid nature of these modern times that, we have already seen, some consider to be a crisis or a mutation. We find antecedents and oddities, however, from the first decades of the last century. Here we must once again make an important distinction, which is that between historical detective novels *(historical mystery)* and historical period detective novels *(period mystery).* While in historical detective novels, truly historical characters, episodes and crimes appear, in historical period detective novels an event is set in the past in order to address contemporary problems in the past, or simply for the pleasure of recreating a period. of history, more or less distant in time. We find the difference in *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing:* 25

25 Rosemary Herbert (ed.) (1999), *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing.* New York: Oxford University Press, Period mystery, p. 328.

> The historical detective novel, a hybrid between a historical novel and a mystery novel, can be distinguished from the historical detective novel, in which historical characters, events and crimes appear. This subgenre offers a privileged place from which to comment on human behavior or the life of each era.
> For example, Ray Harrison describes society's drug addiction problems in a chilling, modern style in a story set in 1894 titled *Tincture of Death* (1989).
>
> […] For many writers, however, the period setting may be chosen primarily to provide the reader with a vivid experience of another time. […] The key for the writer to be able to convince in this subgenre depends on his ability to provide a convincing setting in a time different from ours. As documentation on the 20th century is abundant, the setting is a relatively easy element to recreate. Magazines, newspapers, films, radio recordings, even survivors of the period, help the writer achieve the appearance of authenticity necessary to reproduce the spirit of the time.

The novels of Saylor, Maddox and Borrell are, therefore, historical detective novels, and not historical detective novels, since in all of them important characters from the end of the Republican period in Rome appear.26

As we have said, the historical detective novel is a recently successful genre, but its origins go back in time, although it has not been the most recurrent subgenre of the detective novel due to the consequent anachronism of stating that at a very long time remote detectives or modern police procedures have existed. We will talk about the police in ancient Rome later, but for now we will review here the reflection that, despite its artificiality, fans of historical detective novels gladly accept the projection of the

26 Perhaps the least denotative novels in this regard are *La lagrima de Atenea,* by Joaquín Borrell; *Last Seen in Massilia,* by Steven Saylor; and *The Temple of the Muses,* by Maddox Roberts. In all three cases we have the protagonists (Diomedes, Gordian and Decius the Younger) doing "tourism" in the ancient world: in the country of the Taurus, in Massilia and in Alexandria, respectively. However, the absolute involvement of the protagonists with historical events, and the continuous comments on current political events in Rome, make them "extravagant" novels within their respective series, but historical novels nonetheless.

schemes of the modern detective novel to the real past. As Catherine E. Hoyser tells us in *The Oxford Companion* (p. 209):27

> Despite the power of universal explanation they have, systems of interpretation of reality show traces of their origin in specific times and specific places. Sigmund Freud's theory of family pathology has evident roots in the bourgeois culture of the late 19th century in central Europe. Nevertheless, it is useful when applied anachronistically in the examination of, say, the conflicts of medieval priests with papal authority. Such an anachronism inspires the practice, for entertainment purposes, of telling adventures that take place in the past through the modern detective novel. Although the genre was born from the conditions of modern life that defines crime as a huge social problem and created the need for professional detectives, writers face few difficulties in using this narrative genre conditioned by the social experience of our present with object of "reading" the events of the past.

However, despite this apparent ease of extrapolating the modern creation of the detective novel to the past, the majority of authors do not place their plots very far from the present, but prefer the recent past. Without a doubt, the favorite period to do so is the 19th century, still very close in time, and in whose context the detective novel was precisely born. It is therefore a suitable setting for what in Spain has been called "the retro detective", since it is not too complicated to set a mystery or series of mysteries in the same century in which this type of novel emerged and begin to document it. from the same novels of the period that have come down to us.
This is even more the case with novels set in more recent periods in time.

To exemplify a bit, we could cite the authors Peter Lovesey, who sets Sergeant Cribb and Constable Thackeray in the Victorian era in *Wobble to Death* (1970), fictional characters. The same author introduced us to "Bertie" (Albert Edward, Prince of Wales and future King Edward VII) doing the job of detective in the novels *Bertie and the Timman* (1987), *Bertie*

27 My translation.

and the Seven Bodies (1990) and *Bertie and the Crime of Passion* (1993). Without a doubt, the author best known for setting her series in the Victorian period is, both in Spain and in Anglo-Saxon countries, Anne Perry, who has achieved great success with her series about Inspector William Monk and, above all, with the series by Inspector Thomas Pitt and his wife Charlotte, where he recreates the period with great fidelity and uses its modernity to put thoughts and attitudes into the mouths of his characters that win the sympathies of the contemporary reader. In the United States, nineteenth-century detective novels with a North American setting are also practiced, a field in which Miriam G. Monfredo, Diane Day and Teona Tone have stood out. The author Wendi Lee's creation of Detective Jefferson Birch stands out above all for setting its mysteries in the Old West. As for the historical mysteries that have unleashed the greatest amount of speculation and novels in the Anglo-Saxon world, we find the death of the princes in the Tower of London (related to Richard III), the identity of Jack the Ripper (who has recently seen a new version by the famous creator of the coroner Kay Scarpetta, Patricia Cornwell), the death of Christopher Marlowe and the theories about the assassination of President Kennedy.28

To finish this comment on the historical detective novel set in recent times, we will mention the series with real characters from the past in fictional situations, as is the case of one of the best examples of the retro detective in the American crime novel: Toby Peters, a detective created by Stuart Kaminsky who solves criminal cases involving stars from the golden age of Hollywood.29

Let us now go back much further in time until we end up encountering our subgenre, the Roman-themed detective novel. For this brief introduction, we follow Rosemary Herbert (ed.).30 Beyond the 19th century, authors

28 The reader will find an exemplification of all these categories in Rosemary Herbert (ed.), “Historical Mystery”, in *op. cit.,* pp. 209 b-210 a.

29 Cf. Jordi Canal, “Retro detective: The return to the past of the American detective novel,” in *Prótesis,* 2 (April, 2003); Rosemary Herbert, *op. cit.,* “Historical Mystery”, p. 210 a; “Kaminsky, Stuart”, in Javier Coma (1986), *Dictionary of North American crime novels.* Barcelona: Anagrama [Passwords, 80]; Salvador Vázquez de Parga (1981), *The myths of the criminal novel.* Barcelona: Planeta [Texts, 67], pp. 272, 301.

They have not ventured excessively into historical periods in which the word detective had not been coined.31 When they have done so, in England there have been two important focuses of interest with representative series: the Elizabethan period and the Middle Ages. Regarding the Elizabethan period we have authors such as Leonard Tourney, who has a series dedicated to Matthew Stock, with titles such as *The players' boy is dead* (1980) or *Low Treason* (1983). Regarding the medieval period, we have P.
C. Doherty with the series of Hugh Corbett, secretary of Edward I who at the end of the 13th century solves criminal cases; but without a doubt the best known of all the medieval series is that of Father Cadfael, the creation of the British Ellis Peters (1913-1995), who throughout twenty novels developed in the 12th century has become one of the historical authors most popular and international detective novels. The Cadfael series was inaugurated in 1977 with *A Morbid Taste for Bones.* It is one of the great successes of the genre and was popularized thanks to a television series starring Sir Derek Jacobi, the unforgettable interpreter of Emperor Claudius in the adaptation of the novels by Robert Graves released in 1976 by the BBC.32

Other examples of historical novels that are more remote in time have been *Aristotle Detective* (1978), by Margaret Doddy, this time with a Greek theme and the role of the great philosopher, and we even have one of the great references of the problem novel, such as Agatha Christie. , going back in time to none other than ancient Egypt in the rarity *Death Comes as the End* (1944), which in Spain was translated as *Nefertiti's Daughter.* Although Rosemary Herbert *(op. cit.,* p. 329 a) states that these two works are the only ones that take place in a time period prior to that of the Roman Republic and the Empire, we know that there are others

30 Rosemary Herbert (ed.), *op. cit.,* pp. 328 b-329 a.

31 For this reason, the authors resort to reasonable euphemisms to describe the activity of their detectives. The most curious and fun, which we accept as generic for this type of detective from the ancient world, is “exquisite.” Later we will talk about this contribution from Borrell. Saylor calls Gordiano *The Finder* (the Hound, in Spanish translation), and Decius Cecilio Metellus has no qualifier for his office of *busybody* (as his father, Old Cutnose, calls it), but his membership first in the commission of three, and later to the Senate, make him inclined to meddle in criminal cases that were not in short supply in his time.

32 Cf. Rosemary Herbert (ed.), *op. cit.,* Peters, Ellis and Cadfael, Brother.

works that eventually delve into those remote times.33
For some reason, the classic Greek-themed detective novel has not prospered, or has not yet been exploited as a source for this type of mysteries. What is certain is that it is also a cultivated subgenre, and there is a page on the Internet entirely dedicated to it, and that lists authors also dedicated to this subgenre of detective fiction. It is maintained by Kris Swank under the title *Sybil and Sleuth.* 34 The novels range from ancient Greece to the Byzantine era, and the most striking thing among the list of authors offered is finding, as in the case of Joaquín Borrell, the Spanish of Cuban origin José Carlos Somoza, who in La caverna *de las ideas* (Alfaguara, 2000) introduces the investigator Heracles Póntor to investigate the murder of ephebes in Plato's Athens.

3. Chronology of the Roman-themed detective novel. Richard M. Heli's List

This is, more or less, the panorama of the historical detective novel in which our subgenre is located. It is, along with the medieval-themed detective novel, the subgenre of the most popular historical detective novel and rich in authors and works. To date, no comprehensive study of this subgenre has been published, so the existing bibliography is reduced to isolated comments within books dedicated to the study of the historical novel, as is the case of the excellent works, already mentioned, by Montero Cartelle-Herrero Ingelmo and Carlos García Gual. However, it is the websites that take the initiative in this regard and become pioneers in the organization and rationalization of knowledge with a truly ambitious ambition.

33 Noreen Doyle has a fantastic website dedicated to Egyptian historical fiction, where she also maintains a chronology of detective novels with ancient Egyptian themes, at http://www.egyptomania.org/aef/Egyptfiction.
html. The medieval detective novel is represented on the Internet by Renee Vink's excellent page at http://www.reneevink.net, where she offers a list of three hundred medieval mystery titles in eight languages; Nance Hurt also offers a listing at http://members.tripod.com/~BrerFox/medieval.html, a listing whose novels are sometimes discussed on another page, the one maintained by Sue Feder at http://mywebpages.comcast.net /monkshould. These pages are still active as of April 2008.

34 At this address: http://personal.riverusers.com/~swanky/greece.htm. The page is still active.

encyclopedic. It is, therefore, time to talk about two pages without which it would not be possible to address a general approach to the history of the subgenre of the Roman-themed detective novel. And it would not be possible for two reasons: because without the first of them we would not be able to understand the chronological development of this variant of the historical novel, and without the second, we would not be able to delve into the critical consideration that each of them deserves in our opinion. of his readers.

The first of them, *The Detective and the Toga,* has been created and is directed by Richard M. Heli at the address http:// histmyst.org. The second, of a character that is not limited exclusively to the detective novel with a Roman theme, but rather to the historical novel with a Latin theme in general, is *Fictional Rome,* and can be consulted at http://intraweb.stockton.edu/ eyes/page. cfm?siteID=78&pageID=1. This impressive page, directed by Fred Mench (Professor of Classics) is maintained by the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Pomona, so it has a marked institutional character in terms of the composition of its board of directors and the profusion of critical texts on the Latin historical novel. Dated April 2008, it stores 1,661 critical reviews of as many novels and 157 short stories, as well as numerous essays and testimonies from the authors about their work as historical novelists. This extensive repository of reviews and information on the Latin historical novel is completed by various sections on historical figures, a summary of the most relevant events in the history of Rome, a Latin vocabulary and various guides to reference works.

Let us now return to Richard M. Heli's creditable performance on his *The Detective and the Toga page.* This page remains constantly updated, allowing fans of Roman-themed detective novels to be aware of new publications by their favorite authors, reissues of out-of-print texts, and even titles that are rescued from oblivion and become available. add to the list of news. It is mainly through the mammoth volumes that some stories by classical authors can reach us again due to the impossibility (hopefully temporary) of complete works, as in the case of Wallace Nichols, of whom we will talk later. The main page closes with a list of links to other pages and also with the way to immediately purchase any

of the titles by immediately going to the online bookstore “amazon.com”

Without a doubt, what makes this page truly important is the “Ancillary” section, where Richard M. Heli carries out a classification of all the works he knows from the following points of view: by author (Author *Profiles),* where he makes a synopsis of the biography of each author and their published novels or stories; by the time period in which these works take place *(By Time Period),* from the founding of Rome to the reigns of the Byzantines Justin, Justinian and Constantine V; Finally, it establishes a chronology of the Roman-themed crime story, mentioning its titles from 1935 *(The Julius Caesar Murder Case,* by Wallace Irwin, would be the founding novel of the genre) until 2004 (in By *Publishing Chronology).* Next, we are going to comment on his list of the chronology of the Roman-themed criminal story, trying to establish certain eras for the genre.

When we deem it appropriate, we will make a “stop along the way” to make the comments we deem relevant. Its list includes authors in English, French, Italian and German. According to the data provided by Heli, we note that the history of the classic Roman-themed detective story has a first stage that spans from 1935 to 1948, which includes the following works.

3.1. Pioneer Era: 1935-1948

Made up of a few novels that, precisely because there are not too many, we list below. In 1935 the first of the subgenre appeared, *The Julius Caesar Murder Case,* by Wallace Irwin (New York-London, 1935). In it, Publio Manlio Escribón is a journalist for the *Evening Tiber.* Covering the murder of the day leads him to interact with the great men of his time, among whom are Cleopatra, Mark Antony, Pompeii, Brutus, Cassius and Julius Caesar himself, about whose murder Irwin has his own theory. The great characters of that time behave in this novel like gangsters of the 1930s, a trait that will occur again later, until it becomes almost a constant.

In 1936, Gertrud Atherton published *Golden Peacock* (New York: Houghton Mifflin). The adolescent Pomponia, niece of the poet Horacio, investigates the death of her parents, and this leads her

to discover an intrigue to assassinate Emperor Augustus. The action takes place around 20 BC and Horace, Virgil, Titus Livy and Ovid, among others, appear. It is the first work of the genre to be written not only by a woman, but from the point of view of a female protagonist. Furthermore, it consists of the introduction of another recurring theme of this type of works: the invention of a close relative of a great historical figure in order to reveal to us the ins and outs of the intellectual and political aristocracy of his time.

The first novel of the genre written in German appeared in 1940; We owe it to Hermann Falk and its title was *Der Sarg der Kleopatra: Kriminalroman.* (Auffenberg, Berlin).

Jay Williams published *Stolen Oracle in 1943.* (London-New York: Oxford University Press). The first novel of the youth subgenre, it stars the fourteen-year-old Roman Gaius Hortensius Decimus and his good friend Rufus Lentulus. They both investigate the theft of the Sibylline books. Augustus, Horace and Maecenas appear.

In 1945 the first story appears, due to the pen of James Yaffe: "The Problem of the Emperor's Mushrooms" (published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* 1945; republished in the anthology Edward E. Hoch (ed.) (1981), *All But Impossible!* New York: Ticknor and Fields. This is the first story published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* where numerous stories would come to light starting in the 80s. This story is a *howdunnit* about the way in which Claudio was poisoned with mushrooms.

In 1948 we have a double: first, Charles Connell publishes *Meet Me at Philippi* (London: Herbert Jenkins). History not devoid of humor about the persecution of Caesar's assassins; There the poet Cinna appears. Secondly, Jay Williams repeats with *The Roman Moon Mystery* (New York: Oxford University Press). This is the second and last novel by this author within the genre. A young captain of the night vigils, Aquilio Justo, investigates the death of a rich senator and focuses the plot on the description of the life of early Christians.
It takes place in 58 AD; appearance of Nero.

These are the works that comprise the first period of this type of novel. As we can see, *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* published its first story, in this case by the precocious James Yaffe (1927), discovered by this magazine at the age of fifteen. Prolific author of novels and plays, he has also

published a good number of detective stories, and today teaches at a university in Colorado Sprigs.35 We also notice that the genre written in the German language will begin to develop, inaugurated by Hermann Falk (1901-1981), a school teacher and prolific author of novels of mystery and youth.
The youth-oriented novel will also emerge, a variant that will have notable success in English and German, as we will see later. It is notable that none of the authors, except Jay Williams (1914-1978), returned to the genre again. In the case of this author, he was one of the first to write stories and novels starring girls and adolescents, and *The Stolen Oracle* was his first published work.36

From the beginning, the novels are immediately inscribed within the historical novel, and not the historical period novel, since since *The Julius Caesar Murder Case,* the historical protagonists are an integral and fundamental part of its plots. Wallace Irwin (1875-1959), a prolific and widely produced writer, in this case approached the genre as one of his many historical interests, as he also wrote works of varied content. The same can be said of the first novelist of the genre, Gertrude Atherton (1857-1948), predecessor of our Lindsey Davis or Marilyn Todd, who also wrote some works set in classical Greece, but not of a detective nature.

As is easy to see, the fact that during thirteen years only six novels and one story appeared shows that the genre was barely in its infancy, and that neither the public nor the critics seemed to support it with enthusiasm. Added to this general impression is the fact, already confirmed, that only Jay Williams (and later Charles Connell, with a new work in 1951) returned to the genre, but that they do not believe in it, due to lack of conviction or lack of knowledge. editorial significance, a series with fixed characters.

3.2. Classics era: 1950-1979

After a brief interval (no novel appears in 1949) the half century marks the first development of the detective novel with a Roman theme, although it will do so mainly through the short story.

35 The news is not updated, as it dates from 1997. Cf. Heli, *Profiles of the Authors,* James Yaffe.

36 Cf. http://www.moonmountainpub.com/williams.html

This is the era marked by two fundamental authors: the Englishman Wallace Nichols and the German Henry Winterfeld; It spans from 1950 (with the publication of Nichols's first story) to 1979 (with the publication of an omnibus containing Winterfeld's novels).
We can rightly call it the era of the classics.

During this period the great star is, without a doubt, the Englishman Wallace Nichols (1888-1967) with the sixty stories published in *The London Mystery Magazine (LMM)* starring the slave detective Solio, who begins his career by solving the disappearance of the jewels of Empress Faustina.
Wallace Nichols is today an author perhaps unfairly forgotten, since of his abundant production for *LMM* during seventeen years (1950-1967) only four of his stories have been republished in the English and North American omnibus editions. He is, therefore, an author who should be rediscovered in these times when the historical detective novel has gained such popularity, and it would not be out of place if one day we saw published the complete stories of the slave detective of the 2nd century AD, Solio, published in the English magazine, since a quick review of the Amazon.com online catalog shows the result that his complete stories are not collected in English, although they nevertheless enjoy sufficient interest to be collected in the mammoth anthologies, some of which are still available. they. Wallace Bertram Nichols was a poet and novelist *(Simon Magus* was one of his Roman-themed novels, developed in the 1st century AD).37 We have not been able to find more information about this outstanding author of our subgenre, so the most important references We find them again in the magnificent page of Richard M. Heli, and what he tells us about him could not be more stimulating: born in Birmingham, he was editor of the magazine *Windsor Magazine.* He was fluent in five languages and was fluent in the classical languages, including Babylonian and Egyptian. A friend of figures such as Winston Churchill, Dylan Thomas and Lawrence of Arabia, he moved to Cornwall in 1934 for health reasons, where he devoted himself productively to literature until his death in 1967. And that is all we know about Wallace Nichols.

With respect to the German Henry Winterfeld (1901-1990), his production was much smaller, since he published three novels for

37 Wallace Bertram Nichols, Simon Magus. Wolsey, 1946.

young people from the Caius series, another teenager involved in criminal-themed adventures in ancient Rome.38 According to Richard M. Heli, he is the most widely translated author of the entire genre, but it seems not yet into Spanish. Winterfeld was an author of youth literature throughout his life, so his foray into our subgenre, despite his importance to it, was another facet of his fertile imagination. Born in Hamburg, he wrote his first children's book for the entertainment of his daughter. Faced with the progressive rise of Nazism, Winterfeld leaves Germany to settle in the United States.

Although they are the most representative authors, as they created separate series within the genre, we see in Richard Heli's list that they were not the only ones. Without being able to speak of an overpopulation of novelists, we note that there are many more than in the first stage of the pioneers, and that indeed we seem to be facing the prologue of a *boom* in the historical novel. Among all these authors, only Anthony Price (1928) ventured into the genre more than once, with the stories “A green Boy” (1973) and “The Boudicca Killing” (1979). Price was first a journalist and crime writer at the Oxford Mail until winning the British Crime Writers' Silver Dagger Award for his first novel, *The Labyrinth Makers.*

Among the authors who eventually contributed to the genre, we also have Charles Connell (1951), with *Most Delicious Poison;* Miriam Allen Deford (1952), “De Crimine”, in *EQMM;* Charles Edward Gray (1955), *Murder Defies the Roman Emperor* (Boston); John and Esther Wagner (1961), *Gift of Rome* (Boston-Toronto: Little, Brown and Co.), a novel based on Cicero's *Pro Cluentio* and in which a beautiful young woman investigates the death of Opianicus the Elder; Leslie Turner White (1962), *Scorpus the Moor* (New York: Doubleday); John Blackburn (1962), *The Flame and the Wind* (London); John Hersey (1972) publishes *The Conspiracy*

38 The novels are *Caius ist ein Dummkopf* (North American edition, *Detectives in Togas.* English translation by Richard and Clara Winston. New York, 1956; new edition in 1990, by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Secondly, *Caius geht ein Licht auf.* Berlin, 1969, Blanvalet Verlag. North American edition, *Mystery of the Roman Ransom.* Translation by Edith McCormick. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, reissued in 1990. The third novel in the series is *Caius in der Klemme.* Munich, 1976, Blanvalet Verlag. The omnibus edition with which this period of classics closes was published as *Caius, der Lausbub aus dem alten Rom.* Munich, 1979, Blanvalet Verlag.

(New York: Knopf); Anthony Price (1973), “A Green Boy,” in *Winter's Crime* 5; Mary Ray (1974) demonstrates that the genre remains very versatile for young people's literature in *The Ides of April* (London: Faber); Kenneth Benton (1976), *Death on the Appian Way* (London); In January of the same year, the story by R.
L. Stevens, “The Three Travelers”, in *EQMM,* where the protagonists are none other than the three Wise Men who investigate the disappearance of one of their gifts.

Finally, I want to note that in 1975 Michael Grant published his *Murder Trials by Cicero* (New York, 1975 and 1990 in paperback).
Viking Press published this translation that the great philologist Michael Grant made of Cicero's criminal trials, which we record here because it has had a great influence as documentation on the period for some novelists of the time that we will address below (Steven Saylor is the case most notably).

3.3. Contemporary or mature period: 1980-2000

Although no novels in our genre were apparently published in 1980, it was the year in which *The Name of the Rose,* by Umberto Eco, appeared, marking the end of the second period or of the classics and the beginning of the third, the contemporary era that we have wanted to call maturity.
Although *The Name of the Rose*
is set in medieval times, we discuss it here because of its significance, since we will see that starting in 1982 the subgenre of the historical detective novel, and specifically the one in question, will experience an expansion of authors and titles, which we will try to synthesize by grouping authors by nationality or school. The truth is that the abundance of authors, stories and novels must now be systematized in some way, since we can rightly speak of an unprecedented *boom* in the genre. I will not include the novels published after 2001 since the time frame covered by our research stopped in this emblematic year 2000; Yes, I will make, when relevant, an exposition of the most relevant titles published since 2001, but only as a guide. In reality, since 2000 no new authors of great relevance have appeared, and in general, established authors have continued publishing novels from their corresponding series without major stylistic or cultural modifications.

We clearly see that starting in 1980 something happened that produced this novelistic hyperactivity, and that something cannot be anything else,

We insist that the impact of such a great literary success among critics and the public as Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose was.* In this list of works published between 1980 and 2000 we discover that there are several "schools", where their authors coincide not only in gender and nationality, but also in the cultivation of a synthetic style characteristic of the popular novel genres among which is the Latin detective novel.

1) Spanish school. Joaquín Borrell (Valencia, 1956) is the only representative and pioneer of the genre in 1989, with the publication of *La esclava de azul* and, later, *La lágrima de Atenea.*
Graduate in Law, it is a shame that he did not insist beyond the second novel on the adventures of the ironic Diomedes the Exquisite, although this could be remedied one of these days. Borrell is the author of historical novels, not necessarily from the Roman period, and among his production we find other titles such as *The Ballad of the Barefoot Queen* (1995) or *The Bay of the Last Breath* (2003). We will talk about him later and we will dedicate more attention to him.

2) Italian school. It opened in 1982 with *Il medico delle Isole,* by Rosario Magrí, the first installment of four in his series by Pontius Epaphroditus. Nino Marino will give us a single novel, *Rosso pompeiano* (1991), and the great star of this subgenre in Italy will undoubtedly be Danila Comastri Montanari (1948), who published *Mors tua in 1990,* the first novel in his series. In it, Senator Publius Aurelius Statius, a young and charming epicurean, finds the body of a dead young woman and decides to investigate her death. The death of the girl's lover makes him a suspect in her murder. The action takes place in the time of Emperor Claudius. Danila Comastri Montanari has written several historical novels set in Bologna, the city where he lives. His series dedicated to Publius Aurelius Statius continues to be published today and enjoys great success in Italy.

3) French school. The French school began in 1988 with the classicist and university professor Jean Pierre Neraudau (1947-1998), who published *Les louves de Palatin,* and, later, *Le mystère du jardin romain* (1992). Also in 1992, Anne de Leseluc (doctor in archeology and specialist in Roman Gaul, about which she has published scientific and informative books) will begin her series starring Marco Aper, which debuts with the novel Les vacances by Marcus Aper. Marco Aper is a famous

French lawyer working in Rome. A trip to Lugdunum (Lyon) to see a friend causes him to come across a corpse. In more recent times we see that the subgenre flourishes with authors such as Jean D'Aillion *(Attentat à Aquae-Sextiae,* 2000) and with other authors such as Philippe Andrieux, who began publishing the youth series Mysteria in 1999. And even a mysterious Anonymous, which published in 1999 and 2000 two titles starring the teenager Akis and his father Bakyrés, Egyptians living in Rome, and which seem to follow the youth line. Isolated novels such as *Le cahier d'amour* (2000), by Joe Hoestland or *Des ombres sur Alexandrie,* by Patrick Weber (2000) do not take away from Anne de Leseluc the scepter of being the most representative French author of the subgenre.

4) The German school. After the Anglo-Saxon school, the German school has long been (remember the case of Henry Winterfeld) the most productive of the subgenre. As in the United States and England, since 1982 there has also been an explosion of authors and titles. The most representative author of the genre in German, and who will mark the starting signal, will be Hans Dieter Stöver (1937), a graduate in Classics and History who taught until devoting himself to writing full-time. His series starring Volcacio, Tillia Capriola and more recently the teenager Quinto make him the great German author of the subgenre. Other authors are Germund Mielke (with four novels between 1999 and 2002, aimed at young audiences); Wolfgang Augsburg and Jürgen Hoffman (both with a novel in 1983); Heide Huber (a work in 1985); Philip Vanderverg *(The Pompeian,* 1986); two novels by Bernhard Hennen in 1996; and, in the same year, another from Cay Rademacher. In 1998, a work by Siegfried Obermeier, *Die schwarze Lucretia: historischer Kriminalroman,* where we are told about the adventures of a Greek doctor and his slave in the time of Augustus.

It is worth highlighting two authors who have also addressed the genre in Germany: Malachy Hyde, pseudonym of Ilka Stitz and Karola Hagemann, who have published two novels written together in 1999 and 2002; and finally, the successful writer Gisbert Haefs, author of great novels about Troy and Hannibal, who has published two works, the most notable in 1999, *Hamilkars Garten,* which takes place in Carthage in the 3rd century BC.

5) The Anglo-Saxon school. It is here where we find the great explosion of titles and authors of the last two decades. Talk about

each and every one of the authors of a novel or short story would not only be an arduous task, but also unnecessary, since only a small number of writers have devoted themselves with dedication to the subgenre of the Roman-themed detective novel. We can divide them all into three groups, and for last we will leave the most important ones:

5.1) Sporadic story authors. In most cases, they are occasional creators without major significance for the genre who have published one or two stories in so-called *mammouth* anthologies or in mystery magazines. Although the interest of their contributions is not small, they are not authors dedicated to the construction of a series, so we will only mention their names and date of publication of the work (for more information, we refer to Heli's chronology): Harry Turtledove (1981 and 2000); Dorothy J. Heydt (1993); SP Somtow (1992); Phyllis Ann Karr, Keith Heller, Keith Taylor, B. Stableford, Anderson and Clark, D. Schweitzer, Claire Griffen, Edward D. Hoch, and L. Sprague de Camp (all with work published in 1996); Tom Holt (1997 and 1998); Paul Barnett and Molly Brown (1997); Ann Gay, Gresh and Weinberg (1998); and Laura Frankos (2000).

5.2) Sporadic novel authors. As in the case of short story writers, these are authors who have influenced the genre occasionally: Barbara Hambly (1983); Michael Levey (1984); John O'Hagan (1988); Ray Faraday Nelson, David Drake and John Evangelist Walsh (1989); Ron Burns (1991 and 1992); Margot Arnold (1993); AC Tassie (1996); and Tom Holland (1997).

5.3) Authors of novels and stories with their own series. Here are the most important authors, those who should be studied with special interest. We proceed to mention them in order of appearance of their series in the Anglo-Saxon market. We must say here that it is not very relevant to distinguish between Americans and English, since in terms of style and themes they do not present really notable differences.

5.3.1. Lindsey Davis. She is the emblematic author of the subgenre, and began publishing her series starring the informant Marco Didio Falco in 1989, which premiered with *Silver Pigs* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson); 1991, *The Silver of Britannia* (Barcelona: Edhasa). It is the first novel in the successful series by Marco Didio Falco. On this occasion, Falco investigates a conspiracy in the time of Vespasian. Titus and Domitian also appear.

Born in Birmingham, England, in 1943, Lindsey Davis studied English literature at Oxford. To date, he has published fifteen novels starring Falco and his style is characterized by a pronounced sense of humor (although not of the parodic type, as in Borrell) and by infusing his female characters with a high independence that was very debatable for the time. but that has generated countless fans of his novels.

5.3.2. John Maddox Roberts. This American narrator born in 1947 is a true all-round author. In addition to his *SPQR series,* starring Decius Caecilius Metellus the Younger, he has published numerous heroic fantasy novels and has even extended the adventures of Conan the Barbarian, the legendary warrior created by Robert E. Howard. *SPQR,* the first novel in the series published in 1990, has recently been republished with the new title *SPQR I: The King's Gambit.* Maddox is also the author of a rarity of history-fiction, a *what if* titled *Hannibal's Children,* where he describes a 1st century BC resulting from Rome losing the Punic Wars. So far he has published eight novels about the Decio cases, although with the curiosity that his novels were previously published in German, since he is a very popular author in the German country. We will talk about him again later.

5.3.3. Kel Richards. Australian born in 1947 who has published numerous *thrillers.* It debuts in the subgenre addressing stories with Roman biblical themes starring Ben Bartolomé. His first title is *Clues for Armchair Detectives.*

5.3.4. Steven Saylor. 1991 is the year of appearance of the best historical fresco of the subgenre, *Roma sub Rosa,* by the North American Steven Saylor (1956), who until now has published ten novels of Gordiano the Hound, the central protagonist of this exciting family saga about the end of the Republic of Rome.

Saylor is the most widely published author in the world, and studied history at the University of Texas. His career also includes two titles that have nothing to do with the classical Roman world. Due to its importance, we will immediately address his work in more detail.

5.3.5. Mary Reed and Eric Mayer. Husband and wife, the co-authors of the John the Eunuch stories debuted in 1993 with the story “A Byzantine Mystery,” and it was not until 1999 that they presented the first novel in the series, *One for Sorrow.*

5.3.6. Marilyn Todd. One of the worst novel titles in the entire history of this subgenre, *I, Claudia,* opens in 1995 what is most likely the most “bizarre” series (in its English meaning) in the history of the genre. The adventures of Claudia Seferio, a mulier dominatrix with Thatcherite gestures and a viper's tongue, is one of the great creations of the genre, despite the fact that the author, with irreproachable English sarcasm, allows herself all the mental anachronisms in the world in order to achieve a product full of humor, attractiveness and erotic obsessions more English than Roman.

5.3.7. David Wishhart. In 1996 he published his work *Ovid.* Born in 1952 in Scotland, he is the only one of these authors to have a master's degree (MA) in classical philology. He has taught Greek and Latin and has published a fictional autobiography of Virgil *(I, Virgil)* and a biographical novel about Nero narrated by this emperor's taster.

5.3.8. Rosemary Rowe (née Rosemary Aitken). This author published her first story, “Mossaic,” in 1996. Born in Cornwall during World War II, she has also written several novels that take place in this English region during the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The first novel featuring the freedman named Libert, who lives in the 2nd century AD, was published in 1999 and was titled *A Pattern of Blood.*

These are the eight authors who represent the current heart of the Roman-themed detective novel written in English, and without a doubt, the most popular outside the borders of the United States and the United Kingdom. Between 2000 and 2008 (we wrote these pages at the end of April of this last year) these eight authors have demonstrated reading success that has allowed them to continue developing their sagas. Thus, in these eight years, these novelists have successfully continued the publication of their works and we have even seen the appearance of a new author of the genre, the Californian Caroline Lawrence, who writes the youth-oriented series starring Flavia Gémina, a teenager who lives around 79 AD

Among all these Anglo-Saxon authors, we have focused for our comments on the subgenre on those that cover the final period of the Republic: we will address the literary production of Steven Saylor and John Maddox Roberts. We will also include, when relevant, some mentions of Joaquín Borrell, as he is the only Spanish author who has touched on the genre.

and a pioneer within it, not only in Spain. In the case of Borrell, we will deal with his only two novels about the same time period that Saylor and Maddox address, that of the end of the Republic, leaving aside other historical novels by the same author that may have addressed Antiquity, such as case of Sibyl. Regarding Saylor and Maddox, we will address their novels published until 2000 and also their stories, but only in the case that these have been collected in volume, which happens in the case of The House of the Vestals, by Steven Saylor. Maddox's short story production has not yet been compiled into a book, and a small part of the stories published by Saylor until 2000 have only seen the light of day in magazines. In total we will talk about two novels by Borrell, five by Maddox and seven novels and a volume of stories by Steven Saylor. We will first proceed to make an introduction to each of the authors and their work.

4. Three authors and their work

4.1. Joaquin Borrell

He is, as we have seen when summarizing the chronology of publication of these novels, one of the pioneers of the third stage of this genre's life. There is very little information that we have been able to find about this novelist, except that he has a law degree and tirelessly cultivates the historical novel, within which he has obtained notable successes. The two novels of Diomedes the “exquiriente” (a brilliant neologism invented by Borrell himself and which we will use frequently from now on) belong to his first creative stage and must have been works of learning on whose characters he did not want to insist further. The first novel in the series is *La esclava de azul,* published by Círculo de Lectores in 1989.

The slave in blue takes her title from Baiasca, the slave of Alcímenes the exquirer, uncle of Diomedes of Athens, who has just arrived in the city of Rome to inherit the fortune of his extravagant uncle. Once in the city, Diomedes discovers that his meager inheritance consists of a hovel on the Janiculum (on whose door the sign reads “Alcimenes the Theban. Exquiriente”); a vessel with his uncle's ashes; and his slave, a twenty-year-old woman of Cemp-sic race dressed in blue and who responds to the name of Baiasca. This slave will inform about the strange death of her uncle (who in reality has not died) and convinces him to succeed him in the office of investigator, a word created by Borrell to designate the detective.

private from those times. A little reluctantly, Diomedes will agree to succeed his uncle and will find himself fully involved in solving his first cases, always helped by the sparkling and loyal Baiasca. As we see, the kind treatment of the life of a researcher in old Rome is what characterizes Joaquín Borrell's style. The entire novel (and its sequel, *The Tear of Athena)* is presented as an elegant comedy where the most recognizable references are the American comedy of the 1930s and 1940s and the television series *Remington Steele.* Since its premiere in 1982, this series starred Pierce Brosnan and Stephanie Zimbalist and in Spain it was well known for its broadcast between Monday and Friday during the after-dinner time slot. *Remington Steele* told the story of the director of the Remington Steele detective agency, who had to invent the mysterious personality of Mr. Steele so that clients would not question the efficiency of a detective agency run by a woman. One day a mysterious art thief, an expert in classic Hollywood films, crosses his path, whom he transforms into the mysterious and non-existent Mr. Steele. The novelty of the series was that the classic detective genre was approached with a sense of humor very close to that of the classic Hollywood comedy, on whose cinematographic legacy Remington Steele often relied to solve the tricky cases that were presented to them. In the series there was, as in Borrell's novels, this erotic and professional game between detective and assistant, where in reality it is the assistant who guides the detective's steps.

The Slave in Blue was published by Círculo de readers in a presentation that highlighted the semi-humorous nature of the novel, with a cover drawn by Julio Vivas that placed emphasis on caricature and voluntarily departed from the artistic and archaeological academicism of other cover designs to “serious” historical novels. Furthermore, an Editor's Note highlighted that this was Borrell's first novel and that it was a commitment by the publisher.39 The 237 pages of the work are distributed

39 Thus, in The Slave in Blue, p. 5, we read: “With the publication of this book, Círculo offers its members and the general reading public the discovery of a hitherto unpublished writer. In this first novel by Joaquín Borrell to be published, the originality of the approach and the freshness of the literary treatment stand out particularly. The amenity of the book and the humor that animates it, soaked in joy and optimism, have made us opt for the novel of this new writer.”

in seven chapters or days and through its pages they also walk, always treated with humor and the healthy irony that Diomedes continually displays, Julius Caesar, Cleopatra and her sister Arsinoe. From the first page, humor will characterize the first-person narrative of Diomedes, and the truth is that the first paragraph of each of the novels opens with a sympathetic reflection that leaves no room for doubt about the general tone of both. plays. Thus, on page 7, Diomedes begins the novel with a very *sui generis* classification of the Romans:

> According to my friend Meriones, a philosopher from the Lyceum, the Romans were classified as lithocephalians, hematophages and chrysodules. The categories were not exclusive, that is, each individual could belong to two of them simultaneously. Those who combined in their person the three characteristics, heads of stone, eaters of blood and servants of gold, were the chemically pure Romans, called to the "cursus honorum". In reality, Meriones was a very moderately successful philosopher, who was nicknamed the Lyceum because he had a small country house nearby, and there were more than well-founded suspicions that he had never visited Rome.

Insisting on this humorous perspective, Diomedes' second novel will take him and Baiasca far from Rome, no less than to the exotic Colchis, and this makes it the least notable of the two works for this work, since as in the case From *Last Seen in Massilia* and *The Temple of the Muses,* by Saylor and Maddox respectively, our characters leave the Italian peninsula to give their series a touch of exoticism and internationality. On this occasion, Alcimenes will convince his nephew Diomedes to travel to Colchis to investigate the mysterious death of Polemon, the crown prince. The style of the second novel insists on humor, although this time Borrell must have already felt a little bored with his characters, since this new novel was published four years later (1993) and has 143 pages, almost a hundred less than the first. divided into six chapters. The type of edition is the same again this time, with a new "comic-type" illustration by Julio Vivas. Thus, this work opens on page 5 with a fun appreciation of the ability of Roman birds to decline their morning trills:

> The morning advanced mercilessly, as witnessed by the chirping of the birds over the Pomona temple. According to my experience in the matter, Roman birds never improvised their trills in the individualistic hubbub that characterizes their fellow birds. They were methodical birds, with disciplined voices, who devoted themselves with relentless insistence to reviewing the second declension. Thus, after the initial "píus, píe, píum", they recreated the "pii" of the genitive and added the dative and ablative with an unmistakable "pio, p

Eleven years have passed and Borrell has published other novels, but none with Diomedes the exquiriente, his uncle Alcimenes and the faithful Baiasca. Let's hope that one day Borrell will once again gift us with his special sense of humor, much more accomplished in these two works (in my opinion) than the sense of humor that characterizes Decio Cecilio Metellus, protagonist of Maddox's works, or Falco by Lindsey Davis.

4. 2. John Maddox Roberts

He is the second of our authors to appear on the market with *SPQR,* which in principle had not been conceived as a series, but as an independent novel. Starting with the second novel, *SPQR* becomes the generic title of the series, and the first installment has only recently acquired the title *The King's Gambit,* while in its Spanish translation it was titled *The Mystery of the Amulet.* In Spain, only four of the novels in the *SPQR* series have been published , and directly in paperback edition by Plaza y Janés. In 1990 *The Mystery of the Amulet* appeared (reissued in 1997) and in 1991 *The Catiline Conspiracy* (reissued in 2000). The translation of the third and fourth novels in the series occurred when our research work was already very advanced (at the end of 2003, published by Nuevas Ediciones de Bolsillo), so we read novels 3, 4 and 5 of the series directly in English.

This North American author (Virginia, 1947) is an all-terrain writer with a lot of published work, including some heroic fantasy novels. Curiously, the novels of the *SPQR* series appear first translated into German, since Maddox is a much more appreciated author in that country than in his own, which is why within the time period covered by our work (novels published in English until 2000) are left out

analysis of some of the titles that continue to appear in dribs and drabs in the United States. The reasons given for this situation are, fundamentally, that the genre enjoys great popularity in Germany (and in general, in the rest of Europe, since not only novels by national authors are published, but also by American and English authors.).

The protagonist of *SPQR* is Decius Caecilius Metellus the Younger, son of Decius Caecilius Metellus the Elder, also known as Cutnose. He belongs, therefore, to the nobility of the time, closing the curious triangle of protagonists of the three series: Greek foreigner (Borrell's Diomedes), noble patrician (Maddox's Decius) and commoner of low social extraction (Gordian of Saylor). Both he and his father are related, therefore, to the real Caecilius Metellus, a family that became one of the most important in the Roman Republic.40 The true representatives of the Roman Republic will frequently appear in the pages of the *SPQR* saga. this dynasty, into which Maddox introduces his protagonist with great skill. Thus, Decius and his father participated in the political life of their time thanks to their links with Quintus Caecilius Metellus Celer or Metellus Nepos. It will not be the only time that Maddox resorts to this with remarkable success, since from the third novel *(The Sacrilege),* Decius will meet his fiancée Julia, also a fictional niece of Gaius Julius Caesar.

In the first novel of the series, Decius will face for the first time those who will be his antagonists throughout the series: the historical figures Publius Clodius Pulcer and Pompey. It will also be the first time that Clodia, sister of the tribune of the plebs, and “bad officer” of the saga, appears in a female portrait that is greatly reminiscent of Livia from the television series *I, Claudio.* Also during the first novel, Titus Annio Milón (a great friend of Decius), Cicero and Julius Caesar will appear, with whom Decius will maintain a cordial relationship. Unlike Saylor, the saga opens immediately after Sulla's dictatorship, so the only portrait we have of this historical figure

40 The first important Caecilius Metellus was L. Caecilius Metellus, consul in 251 BC, and the last, Quintus Caecilius Metellus Creticus, consul in 6 BC and adopted son of Caecilius Metellus of the same name who was praetor at the end of the Republic. Cf. Jorge Martínez-Pinna, Santiago Montero Herrero and Joaquín Gómez Pantoja (1998), *Dictionary of historical figures.* Madrid: Isthmus. In the P. 418, the authors present the genealogical table of the Cecilius Metellus.

It comes from the *Roma sub Rosa saga.* Here we must already make explicit the great difference between Saylor and Maddox:41 while Saylor is a revisionist author who tries at all times to dig into the testimonies and find in them a hidden truth based on deep and contrasted reflection, Maddox follows almost to the letter the official vision of history, which is what Cicero, Julius Caesar and Plutarch have left us. Thus, Saylor's vision of the Clodians is complex and full of nuances, while Maddox insists again and again on their inherent evil, as did Cicero in his speeches and Plutarch in the passages he dedicates to them. For Saylor, Cicero and Caesar are above all political animals full of ambition and desire for glory, monsters so deeply intelligent that they can adapt their idea of the common good to that of their own prosperity. For Maddox, Caesar will be the great hero of the time, and Cicero will be the representation of the kind and wise old man of the tribe. Saylor will not follow the exalted and immodest vision that each person had of themselves, while Maddox starts from that egocentric vision to humanize it, but never to deny or question it. They are different attitudes towards history that will lead (and hence the exciting exercise of contrasting them) to two completely different recreations of the same historical characters and events.

Thus, *The Mystery of the Amulet* will be the presentation of all the important characters of the series, historical or invented, except in the case of the already mentioned Julia. As in *Roma sub Rosa,* family life will also be very important in *SPQR.* Decius will relate affectionately with his old slaves, Cato and Cassandra, and will have his ups and downs with Hermes, his personal slave recreated with the mischief and ease of language that characterized the slaves in Plautus's comedies, in which Maddox seems to draw inspiration for this character. In reality, humor is going to be a very important ingredient in the *SPQR series,* but without ever reaching Borrell's premeditated and fresh lack of realism. The irony with which Maddox characterizes Decio (first-person narrator of all his novels) closely rese

41 At this point we have no choice but to leave Joaquín Borrell out, since historical figures are used in his novels in a very episodic manner, and the humorous treatment that permeates his two works completely departs from realism, and therefore, from any revisionist or traditionalist tendency in the history of Rome.

Lindsey Davis, and also sometimes the humor emerges through personal comments that represent absolute cultural anachronism (Milón and Clodius, for example, are literally mentioned as “gangsters”, and seem like a premeditated recreation of Lucky Luciano and Al Capone) .

In 1991, the second novel in the series appeared, *The Catilina Conspiracy,* reading which produced a strange effect. Far from the surprising historical fresco mixed with thriller elements produced by Saylor, this novel is equally based on Sallust and Cicero, but again follows the partisanship of the sources without reconsidering a more benevolent idea of the famous conspirator. Maddox passes over this episode, perhaps mythologized, without delving too deeply into the reasons, true or not, that could really push Catilina. Decius, introduced as a mole into Catiline's ranks, will reveal to us the intrigues of this elusive and mysterious figure. The Ciceronian Catilinarias will serve as a source, but will not have a dramatic function within the novel. It is perhaps Maddox's most unfortunate novel.

Two novels will be published in 1992: *The Sacrilege,* perhaps the most interesting work of the entire series and where Maddox apparently points to the revisionist line of history.
In this work, Maddox will offer a suggestive personal version of the famous episode of Clodius in the house of Pontifex Maximus during the rites of the *Bona Dea* and will introduce the character of Julia, the beloved of Decius the Younger. This year will also be the year of publication of *SPQR* 's fourth novel , *The Temple of the Muses,* which we can consider as the tourist work of this series, since it takes place in Alexandria and the politics of Rome are only recreated for allusive purposes. Decius and his slave Hermes arrive in the city accompanying Metellus Creticus on an official mission, but once there he soon meets with Julia Minor (who arrives on vacation) and his friend the forensic doctor Asclepiodes (who is in Alexandria giving lectures). conferences). The murder of Iphicrates of Chios will lead him to discover a Parthia plot to attack Rome with new war machines with cutting-edge technology for the time.

Between 1993 and 1999 John Maddox Roberts will be almost absent from the Anglo-Saxon market, but his new novels will continue

publishing successfully translated into German.42 1999 will mark Maddox's return to the United States with the publication of *Saturnalia* by his new publishing house, Minotaur, which takes advantage of the occasion to also republish the first four novels in this series that were once published by Avon. . In *Saturnalia,* Decius faces none other than the supposed murder of his relative, Q. Cecilio Metellus Celer, and the gens Cecilia suspects Clodia, his wife. During this “Christmas” adventure for Decius, he will discover that some of the most important men and women in Rome practice pre-Italic rites in the Vatican countryside. Among them, as could not be less, Fausta and Clodia.

The *SPQR* series is characterized by not having a previously established general outline, or if there is, it is not public as Saylor's for Roma sub Rosa has always been . Even if there is one, *SPQR* is not a closed saga that aims to offer a historical fresco of old Rome. It is a series of detective novels that take place at that time and through which the great characters of their time walk.

Maddox will write Decio novels as long as they continue to be well received in Germany, the United States and the rest of the world.
We know, yes, that Decius wrote his stories from old age in the time of the First Citizen Augustus; We also know that he will treat Cleopatra as an adult (she has an episodic appearance when she is still a child in *The Temple of the Muses)* and that one day she will regret the fact that she did not die young, according to a mysterious prophecy that is told to us in one of the first books in the series. But the truth is that *SPQR* runs slowly in time because, in the eleventh novel of the series, Decius is a pilgrim praetor and investigates some murders in Bayas.

Maddox's virtue as a narrator is freshness of style and a way of making the uninformed reader understand the

42 *Saturnalia* as *Tödliche Saturnalien* (München: Goldmann, 1994); *Nobody Loves a Centurion* as *Tod eines Centurio* (München: Goldmann, 1995); *Der Fluch des Volkstribuns* (München: Goldmann, 1996); *SPQR VIII: The River God's Vengeance* as *Die Rache der Flußgötter: ein Krimi aus den alten Roma* (München: Goldmann, 1997); *Die Schiffe der Kleopatra* (München: Goldmann, 1999); *In Namen Caesars* (München: Goldmann, 2000). Also worth mentioning here is the fact that Maddox was not entirely absent with his character Decio, as he published some stories in magazines and anthologies. Cf. *Chronology,* years 1993, 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2000.

extinct Roman Empire through certain similarities with the current supremacy of the United States. In this regard, we must assert here that the impression conveyed by the entire series is that, for Maddox, the Romans were the Americans of that time.

4. 3. Steven Saylor

Steven Saylor (1956) is the most representative North American author of the genre, since until now all his novels have been published first in English and then have been translated with enormous success into numerous languages. Speaking of figures, he is the best-selling and most recognized author inside and outside the United States: one million copies worldwide, citing his editor Keith Kahla, from St. Martin's Press.43 According to the author's estimates, His work has been translated into fourteen languages.44 He published his first novel, *Roman Blood,* in 1991, and the good reception he received enabled him to prolong the life of his protagonist, Gordiano the Hound, and rethink the series as a family saga that will cover the entire historical period of the end of the Republic. Today, with the imminent appearance of *The Triumph of Caesar* in May 2008, the saga is inevitably approaching its end. Steven Saylor, born in Texas, where he has developed two novels that deviate from our genre but not from the mystery narrative *(A Twist at the End* and *Have You Seen Dawn?),* studied history at the University of Texas at Austin, where his interest in the Roman period began; He has been an editor of gay erotic literature (the apparent homosexuality of Meto, the second adopted son of Gordianus the Hound, is one of the most interesting features of the personal lives of the protagonists of *Roma sub Rosa)* and in more recent times, thanks to his fame as a period novelist, he has presented the documentary series *The Great Empire: Rome,* broadcast on the History Channel. Furthermore, Saylor is the most prodigal of our three authors in granting interviews, so it is not difficult to find some of them on the Internet, as wel

43 Deirdre Donahue, “Classics on Odissey from Stuffy to Cool,” in *USA TODAY,* 7-24-2002.

44 Carlo Vennarucci, “Steven Saylor Interview”, in Italian-mysteries.com: http://italian-mysteries.com/saylor-interview.html

enthusiastic reviews of his own work,45 since Steven Saylor maintains his website himself (http://www.stevensaylor.com), and responds slowly but surely to the emails sent to him by his readers.

Saylor has acknowledged several times that his first intention was not to build a series. *Roman Blood* appeared as an independent novel that was not going to have continuity, despite the fact that it contained all the ingredients for an extension of it: the love relationship of the exquirer, Gordiano the Hound *(The Finder,* in its original version), with his Hebrew slave Bethesda was in its beginnings, and in the final pages of the first novel, Gordianus himself picks up who will be the first of his adopted children, the then deaf-mute Echo (so named because of Saylor's admiration for *The name of the* rose).46 After a trip to Italy in 1987, reading *Cicero's Murder Trials,* edited by Michael Grant, encouraged him to write Roman Blood when he realized that he could not find any work on the market that could satisfy the need. to read a detective novel with a classical Roman theme, since at that time Lindsey Davis had not yet published Falco's first. The interest produced in him by reading, above all, the Ciceronian Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino, in Grant's translation (Saylor does not read Latin), was the seed of *Roman Blood,* a novel in which he introduces Gordianus the Hound, who investigates the case of Roscius for Cicero and involves Sulla himself. Already in this novel, Saylor's usual characteristic appears, which is historical revisionism. This author thoroughly studies the sources that have been transmitted to us in order to later make his own interpretation of what could have truly happened. To this attitud

45 Without a doubt, the most important is the criticism written by none other than Ruth Rendell, great lady of the crime novel and authentic living classic, who made a series of enthusiastic comments on Saylor's work after reading one of the best novels. from the series, *The Venus Throw:* “Taylor's erudition is breathtaking and her style is captivating [...]. It is difficult to put the book down, and at the same time you have the feeling that here we have the translation of some recently discovered and long-hidden work of classical literature” (Ruth Rendell, “The Roman Knows”, in *London Sunday Times* [March 7, 1999]).

46 Caroline Cummins, “Steven Saylor Profile,” in *January Magazine* (June 2002).

history-fiction (which is valid in the novel, and to which Maddox ascribes himself with *The Sacrilege),* we owe him the exciting portraits of characters such as Clodius and his sister Clodia, of Catiline, Cicero and many other protagonists of history that dot his pages.

The success of *Roman Blood* led Saylor's editor to ask him to extend the first novel, and this is how what is perhaps the best saga of the genre emerged: *Roma sub Rosa.* Saylor himself explains it in an interview with Italian-mysteries.com, where he also highlights one of the distinctive features of most detective narratives: the almost mandatory need to create a character that propitiates an entire series:

> The St. Martin publishing house was interested in more Gordiano novels because the first book had sold quite well; They had sold the rights for paperback and to a few foreign publishers. When they asked me where the next one in the series was, I was a little like: no, no, this is a literary novel. I didn't understand anything about the dynamics of publishing or the publishing business. I guess I had that literary prejudice against series, but it was a bit silly because I had read everything by Sherlock Holmes, and I wanted more, more and more.
>
> So, actually, when they suggested a series, I thought about it for twenty-four hours, and I thought, well, they're handing me this: the offer to write the end of the Roman Republic in as many books as I want, just you have to find the murder cases. I think in publishing mystery novels, they always have their eyes on a series. I think that, as an author of mystery novels, or in any other genre, the most difficult cloth to cut is that of the author of novels autonomous from each other whose vision is that of first one book, and then another. Since publishers are playing it safe and want to build an audience, they want you to invent a series.

The title of the saga became *Roma sub Rosa.* “Sub rosa” is a late Latin expression that has been very successful in the English language, since “sub rosa” designates everything that lies under the secret. Furthermore, it is a new tribute to the novel *The Name of the Rose,* in whose Apostilles Umberto Eco reflects on the many symbolic meanings (until almost losing

all, Eco points out) of this fragrant flower.47 Steven Saylor then made the decision to write the history of a family saga that would cover the entire period of the end of the Republic. The paterfa-milias and great protagonist of the saga would be Gordiano the Hound, a man of low social extraction who is dedicated to carrying out research tasks for the powerful, and who over time would rise up the social ladder. There is no doubt that throughout the series there are three subplots involved: the narration of historical events, the investigation of a crime and the personal history of Gordiano and his family. Saylor's ability to seamlessly combine these three elements is the recipe for the series' success. The busts of the ancient Romans will cease to be made of marble and will become flesh, the turbulent historical events will be described in detail, and on this long path through the course of history, we will suffer, we will enjoy and we will identify with the great family of Gordianus the Hound, a man in perpetual conflict between the homely and idle life in which he would have always wanted to live and the need to intervene, sometimes against his will, in the dark affairs that moved the threads of Roman history. Obsessed with knowing the truth (which Saylor interprets through the historical sources and philological essays that fall into his hands), Gordiano is an honest and ethical man in a world that lacks these two main values, and on the long road of In life, events will lead him to commit actions that, paradoxically and terribly, sometimes go against his own nature and make him suffer. Because Gordianus is not a smart guy in a suffering world, he is a man who suffers with the world he has lived in: this pacifist will be forced to murder Pompey's cousin in *Rubicon,* to disinherit his son Meto in *Last Seen In Massilia ,* to suffer the torture of an autumnal love that ends up dying in her arms in *A Mist of Prophecies* (the faithful husband that Ruth Rendell praised in her review of *The Luck of Venus* will suffer and crumble before our eyes like the same contradictory world and fierce to which it belongs). *Roma sub Rosa* is the masterpiece of the genre and a great creation of popular literature, that which reconciles intelligence with culture, history, and even the beach hammock.

47 Umberto Eco (2002), “Apostilles to The Name of the Rose”, in *The Name of the Rose.* Barcelona: Plaza y Janés [Ave Fénix Debolsillo, 238/1], p. 738.

The second novel in the series takes place in Bayas and has the Spartacus revolt as its backdrop. In *The Arm of Justice* (more than debatable translation of the original title, *The Arms of Nemesis,* 1992) the great dominant figure will be Crassus, the richest man of his time, who burns in the fire of his ambition and awaits the right moment. to intervene violently against the Spartacists. It will be in this novel, less intense than *Roman Blood,* where Gordianus will adopt Meton, a former slave of Crassus, who will become another protagonist of the series and over time will achieve notable relevance within the saga. The painter Iaia of Cyzicus and the Sibyl of Cumae (where the description of the espelunca is intensely inspired by the *Aeneid,* but also by the royal cave) will also have great importance in this novel of the series.

The third installment is one of the most intense and successful of *Roma sub Rosa.* In The Enigma of Catiline, Saylor creates a fascinating historical fresco on the intriguing personality of Catiline. On this occasion the sources will be recreated with the greatest possible detail, as well as its main protagonists will be the object of a suggestive revisionist reading. Catiline will not be that immeasurable monster described by Cicero, and the same speaker will undergo the sieve of a much more critical and less complacent view with respect to the testimonies of Marcus Tullius. Saylor himself has expressed it rep

> In all the books I have tried to find a more unconventional and subversive approach to the story. I always assume that the story has been told by the victors, so there must be an untold story. In *The Enigma of Catiline,* for example, I agreed with the alternative point of view, not with the traditional vision of Cicero, where he presents himself as immaculate
> historical character.48

In this work the great difference in mood between Maddox and Saylor is accentuated more than in others, since both novels, studied in parallel, bring to the fore the substantial differences between both writers. This work is the longest in the series, since it involves a parallel plot that

48 Cf. Carlo Vennarucci, “Steven Saylor Interview”, *loc. cit.*

It consists of the mystery of the decapitated people who appear on Gordiano's farm in Etruria. In Saylor's own words, his writing process was more complex “because it was a longer novel and had two plots: there was the plot of Gordianus on the farm in Etruria, and the plot of the revolution as a whole. It was like two in one. It was simply more work.”49 Furthermore, it is the novel in which Meto assumes the virile toga and his fascination with Catiline will push him to join their ranks, which causes both he and Gordianus the Hound to witness the Catiline's final battle at Pistorium, where Saylor solves a historical enigma: if there were no survivors, where could Sallust take Catiline's stirring final speech to his troops?

Thanks to the history-fiction, it is now clear that it is to Gordianus' prodigious memory to whom we owe his transcription almost word for word.

The fourth novel in the series, The *Venus Throw (1995)* is eminently literary, since the Ciceronian speech in defense of Marcus Caelius and the circumstances that surround him lead Gordianus to once again become Cicero's private investigator. In the course of the novel he will meet Catullus and the Clodios (of whom he will provide a radically different, and much more complex, vision than Maddox's; also more truthful). Not only will the secrets of those turbulent relationships be revealed before Gordian's eyes, but within his family he will discover that the philosopher Dion of Alexandria was poisoned in his own home by his little daughter Diana, who begins to receive prominence within Rome *sub Pink.* The reasons for such a disastrous crime (a parallel plot within the main plot) will make you aware of a painful episode from Bethesda's past.

The murder of Publius Clodius Pulcher and the resolution of the crime in which history incriminated Milo will be the subject of *Murder on the Appian Way (1996),* another powerful novel in the series. On this occasion, Saylor will restructure the murder of Clodius by drawing on all known sources to provide us, within the most stimulating history-fiction, a completely invented but suggestive new version that encourages us to rethink (and this

49 *Idem.*

is another of Steven Saylor's virtues) if our knowledge of history will not be full of false beliefs that have obscured the truth, as J. Goebbels already expressed in a phrase that has become proverbial: “If a lie is repeated a thousand Sometimes, it ends up becoming true.”

The *Roma sub Rosa* series will reach its peak with Rubicón (Rubicon, 1999), unpublished in Spanish, like all other Steven Saylor novels starting with this sixth title. Apparently, the reasons for this disappearance from the Spanish market are due to economic problems between the Emecé publishing house and Steven Saylor, as this is what is clearly deduced from Saylor's words in the interview given to Carlo Vennarucci when this Italian scholar asks him about the reason why his novels have not appeared in Italy:

> I don't have an Italian editor, nor have I ever had one. The St. Martin publishing house currently handles the foreign rights, and for some reason, they have never been introduced to the Italian market. At this point, I think they had bad experiences with Italian publishers who didn't pay. Some other publisher has shown some interest recently. In recent years, I have lost my Spanish editor. I receive emails from Spaniards who feel very bad because they can't finish the series. I tell my editor that we have to find another editor in Spain.50

The fact that a publisher like Edhasa, specialized in historical novels and editor of Lindsey Davis in Spanish, has not picked up the torch of publishing Saylor in Spain indicates that perhaps the *Roma sub Rosa* series has not had the same reception as the novels by the English author, because as we see, the most important authors of this subgenre have been poorly and partially edited in Spain, contrary to what happens in other countries such as Germany or France.

It is a shame that Saylor's work has stopped at the fifth novel, because the Spanish reader is missing something very important; While the Republic enters into absolute crisis when the civil war breaks out between Caesar and Pompey, Gordianus the Hound will also enter into an existential crisis: in *Rubicon*

50 *Idem.*

He will be forced to murder Numerio Pompey, a relative of Pompey the Great, to protect his son Meto, the same one whom he will disinherit in *Last Seen in Massilia.* The new installments of the saga take Gordiano from restlessness to restlessness, and it is at this moment when the heroic antihero created by Saylor appears before our eyes as a more suggestive character than ever as he is not able to cope with his old age at the same level as his high ethical sense in a world where ethics and truth have been irreparably consumed by the flames of war. In *Rubicon,* Saylor plays admirably with the old theme of the mystery of the locked room, inspired by Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and immortalized by Gaston Leroux in *The Mystery of the Yellow Room.* Forced by Pompey the Great to investigate the murder of his relative within Gordian's own house, the novel's dramatic finale, spanning the first months of the civil war, leads to Meto's ban as a supposed traitor. being involved in a plot to assassinate Julius Caesar. Solving this mystery will lead Gordiano to travel to the besieged Massilia in *Last Seen in Massilia* (2000), a work that prolongs and intensifies the events of *Rubicón,* but which represents a minor title within the series. In *Last Seen in Massilia* we will also find a double plot where the only historical thing is the setting of the besieged city, and where Gordiano will investigate the mysterious death of a woman who throws herself (or is pushed) from the city's Rock of Sacrifice. . The investigation of the whereabouts of Meto, who is actually a double agent who has posed as a traitor to Caesar to join Pompey's ranks, will lead Gordianus to reject his son for having become the complete opposite of what Gordianus believed. has always defended.

With this novel, published in 2000, Saylor's time arc that covers our research closes. To date, three more *Roma sub Rosa titles have appeared: A Mist of Prophecies* (2002), *The Judgment of Caesar* (2004) and *The Triumph of Caesar* (May 2008).

Lastly, we want to state that Saylor is one of the few authors whose Author's Note, located at the end of his novels, gives credits for which are the most important classical books and sources used for historical documentation. So the reader can, if he likes, deepen his knowledge

of the historical period of Gordianus the Hound and the characters and works mentioned in the novels.

5. Structural particularities of the Latin detective novel

Kurt Spang, in his chapter “Notes for a Definition”, included in the work *The Historical Novel, Theory and Comments,* 51 establishes an analysis of the structural elements of the historical novel, making it very clear that they are the same as those of the novel not historical, since the historical novel, he affirms, has not generated an independent and specific development. However, he finds that there are discrepancies regarding the structural elements within the two main fundamental types of historical novel: the illusionist and the anti-illusionist historical novel. The first is, as its name indicates, that in which the authors have the desire to give the illusion of truthfulness and authenticity of what is narrated; On the other hand, in the anti-illusionist novel, the author puts all his effort into highlighting the discontinuity and heterogeneity of the events: “the narrated story ceases to be a continuous and unitary and above all autonomous flow to openly become a kind of puzzle whose pieces They have an intentionally precarious cohesion.” Spang gives as examples of this type of historical novel, not very Aristotelian in separating itself from the well-known structure of approach, middle and end, *The Business of Mr. Julius Caesar,* by Bertolt Brecht; *The Ides of March,* by Thorton Wilder; and the three novels of *The Carlist War,* by Valle-Inclán. In this last trilogy, Valle resorts to presenting reality fragmented in very short chapters that are sometimes unconnected to each other. Spang explains (p. 93) the process of anti-illusionism in Wilder's no

> The oft-cited example of *The Ides of March,* organized as an exchange of letters, is also a paradigm of an interruption of the linearity of the story, given that not only is the continuity of the story interrupted, the “voices” also change with high frequency. ” narratives, perspectives change, even the nature of the texts changes, given that in addition to the letters, poems by Catullus in Latin are interspersed with an English/Spanish translation.

51 Spang, Arellano, Mata (eds.), *op. cit.,* pp. 65-114.

As for Brecht, it is the most radical case of anti-illusionism, since Brechtian theory of distancing itself encouraged the spectators of his theater to contemplate his works very aware that they were not attending a performance where they could become emotionally involved, as is the case in the naturalistic interpretation. His short piece *Horatii and Curiatii,* based on the story by Livy, is a perfect example. Thus, *The Business of Mr. Julius Caesar* is already an anti-illusionist novel from the very title, where the use of the words "sir" and "business" is completely anachronistic. The same could be said of Valle and his theory of the grotesque, although the trilogy of *The Carlist War* predates his grotesque fecundity. TO
Despite this division that seems so radical, Spang warns on p. 94 that "no specific historical novel corresponds exactly to one of these two schemes; Each novel—naturally—is a separate case, and the authors take advantage of resources of one type or another. Attribution to one or the other is a question of proportion."

Starting from this, Spang comments on the structural elements of the historical novel, so we are going to analyze our works according to their particularities in six areas. In this regard, it should be said that we do not need to study each work separately, since from the point of view of these peculiarities, the fifteen titles are practically coincident in all aspects.

5. 1. Presentation of the entire novel
First of all, we must define the novels of Maddox and Saylor as illusionist, although nuances should be added to this categorization. Novelists aim at all times to make the action they are telling us credible, which is why they always resort to narrative elements that allow them to create the illusion of truthfulness.
They only separate themselves from this illusionistic ambition when they introduce dream passages that serve to add an interpretation of a symbolic nature. The dog Cerberus that Decius dreams of in *The Sacrilege* is a representation of the triumvirate agreed upon in secret, as are also symbolic the dreams recreated by Saylor in his works (Gordiano dreams of the Minotaur in *The Enigma of Catiline,* and with the same head of Catilina in *Last Seen In Massilia).* These dream passages break with the realistic linearity of the story, but by representing a kind of psychoanalysis of reality,

They fulfill an evocative and relaxing function within the sometimes very hectic course of the novel plots.

Humor is also a distancing phenomenon, so perhaps we should classify Borrell's two novels as anti-illusionist. The sense of humor not only changes from one culture to another, but also within a culture itself over the centuries. What amused the Romans does not have to be funny to us now, and even what is funny to the average modern North American reader does not have to amuse today's Spaniard, although, in the case of North American humor, it is widely spread across the media. from the television series, but not so much in the books. A work as hilarious and brilliant as *A Confederacy of Dunces,* by Kennedy Toole, led its author to suicide when he believed himself to be an author frustrated by not finding a publisher. Today, however, it is considered the masterpiece of humor of the entire 20th century of North American literature, and one of the main works in its entire literary history. Humor can be distancing because it jokingly comments on reality (Maddox uses this a lot) or because it distorts reality to convert it into the model of friendly farce and light comedy, as happens in Borrell. Historical figures such as Julius Caesar or Cleopatra are recreated by Borrell as comedy characters, which leads him to clearly engage in historical anti-illusionism, although not in literary anti-illusionism, since the novel always adheres to the conventions of the humorous novel. white.

The truth is that from the point of view of the presentation of the entire novel, all the works respond to the illusionist model, since they all follow the classic model of approach, middle and end, especially taking into account that, as novels Police officers that they are, cannot circumvent this rigorous structure.52

This leads us to weigh the mixed nature of these novels and make the following consideration: in all the novels studied the structure of the detective novel predominates, since in all of them

52 M. Baquero Goyanes (1989), *Structures of the current novel.* Madrid: Castalia, p. 153: “The detective novel, before being a literary species, is above all a structure […] A historical novel will always be defined by certain aspects that differentiate it from other novel modalities; but, in fact, it does not have the structural fixation that is typical of the detective novel. (The most disparate structures fit into the genre of the historical novel; compare, for example, that of *Quo Vadis?* by Sienkiewicz, and that of *The Ides of March,* by T. Wilder).

There is a crime and an individual who carries out the work of investigator, work that requires him to interview witnesses and suspects and finally to solve the crime and identify the murderer. Perhaps the only novel where this eminently police part is more forced is in *The Enigma of Catilina,* because as we have already mentioned, there are two parallel plots that are not related, except for being contemporaneous in time: the mystery of the decapitated on the farm of Etruria and the course of Catiline's conspiracy in Rome. Even Carlos Mata, in the aforementioned work, affirms that this type of novels are, in reality, “detective novels masked under a historical wrapper”;53
specifically mentions *The Name of the Rose* and the series that Lindsey Davis dedicates to Marco Didio Falco. In the same box we can put Borrell, Saylor and Maddox.

Also, with respect to this point of presentation of the entire novel, all the works are linear and chronological, although sometimes some characters evoke episodes from the past or the narrator character himself evokes characters or episodes from the future, as when Maddox puts in Decius's mouth references to the First Citizen or Cleopatra. This would also be valid for Saylor's novels in which a plot outlined in one novel is followed and resolved in the next (Meton's betrayal at *Rubicon,* where this character disappears, is taken up as the main plot thread of *Last Seen in Massilia).*

5. 2. The narrator

We can approach the narrator from five different angles: identity, degree of information, time and place of narration, and their involvement in the events.

5. 2.1. Narrator identity

In all three cases we have a first-person narrator who responds to the names of Gordianus, Decius the Younger and Diomedes of Athens. In all three cases they are investigators, either because that is their profession (Diomedes is demanding; Gordianus is known as the Hound and lives off the profits of his investigations; Decius is a busybody who is always “snooping”). Although Spang states (p. 97) that they are rare, but not impossible, the

53 Spang, Arellano, Mata (eds.), op. cit., p. 58.

narrators who also participate in the action (this author points out that it is less plausible), the truth is that this coincidence in the three authors refers to one of the conventions of the detective novel, where first-person narrator detectives proliferate.

5.2.2. Narrator's level of information

In all three cases it is an omniscient narrator, since from the beginning he knows the origins and the end of the story. It could not be otherwise, since the three exquirers (Diomedes, Gordianus and Decius) write from the future temporal point of view, more or less distant in time but with enough perspective to thread with the description of the case and of the characters their impressions about the time. However, we must clarify that this omniscience refers only to their direct participation in the story being told, since it would be ridiculous for Gordianus or Decius to get inside the brain of Cicero or Clodia to unravel their thoughts. In this he follows the tradition of the detective novel narrated in the first person, since none of the three novelists adopts the form of a diary for the narration of their characters, which they carry out in writing and through the anachronism of a novel structure that It has nothing to do with the old novel. In this aspect the narration is close to the anti-illusionist novel, since the narrator with limited knowledge predominates: "The normal thing is that the narrator of this type sees the story from below, observes, therefore - as one more and with limitations - the low , the everyday" (Spang, p. 98).

5.2.3. Storytelling moment

It is situated at a point in time after the course of the events, since none of the authors practices the genre through narration through letters or diaries (although letters are common, they do not predominate within the form of the novel, as in *The Ides of March).* From Decius himself we know that he wrote the events from his old age, already in the time of the First Citizen (the Emperor Augustus), as explained to us several times (for example, at the beginning of the novel The *Temple of the Muses);* In the case of Diomedes we do not know very well when he narrates the events that occurred, but it is after they have passed. In the case of Gordiano, the nature of a single novel that *Roman Blood* was originally going to have , makes Saylor incur a cons

with the rest of the novels. While Gordianus writes from his old age the events of, say, Rubicon, in Roman Blood (p. 15) he explains in the present tense that “Normally, when a client sends for me, the messenger is usually a slave of the lowest rank of home". This contradicts the social status that he will acquire years later and that seems to imply that Gordiano writes his novels as events happen to him. Saylor, we imagine, will fix these small details in successive editions of his series.

5.2.4. The place of narration

There is no data in this regard, but everything suggests that the narrative takes place within Rome itself. Be that as it may, all three narrators tell their story within the confines of the classical Roman world, although Diomedes may well have returned to his native Athens, or Decius may have written from a country estate, which is also true of Gordian.

5.2.5. Involvement of the narrator It is about, in Spang's words (p. 99) “taking sides and engaging with figures and events. […] The selection of the type of novel already constitutes a kind of implication, since it corresponds to a certain conception of history and historiography. Secondly, the preference for a certain era, a certain country, a certain character, constitutes another selection.” In the case of the authors, we already see that they have all studied the Roman period and believe that by talking about this era (especially in the case of Saylor) they can explain attitudes or periods of our own. In the case of his characters and structure of his novels, which are more typical of the detective novel than of the traditional historical novel, we see that they have an absolute degree of involvement with the events they narrate and the characters they describe, since they are witnesses of history and attest to its truth, regardless of the official truth, written by the victors.

5. 3. Figures from the historical novel

There are two kinds, naturally. On the one hand we have the true protagonists of history (Cicero, Catullus, the Clodios...) and on the other we have the invented figures. To explain

This, Spang refers to P. Ricoeur:54 “In the scope of the figures of the historical novel there are also, on the one hand, figures with a vicarious function, that is, representative figures that are literary configurations of real people from the past , and on the other, significant figures in the sense of invented by the author and fictitious or simply anonymous without individualized role.”

As Spang highlights on p. 102, in historical novels it is normal for the number of fictional characters to be greater than the number of historical characters, as it turns out to be in these novels. Along with Caesar, Cicero, Clodius and others that appear in its pages we have a multitude of invented, secondary and episodic ones with many levels of functioning within history. For example, the protagonists are always invented (signifying figures): Diomedes, Baiasca, Gordianus and his family, Decius the Younger and Decius the Elder or Julia, Julius Caesar's niece, are fictional characte In front of them we have a relatively small group of historical figures (representative figures) and, finally, a good number of significant or invented figures whose mission in history is variable (slaves, witnesses to a crime, suspects, fictitious senators, And a long etcetera). Within the creation of the main fictional characters, Maddox's creation of Decius Caecilius Metellus the Younger and Decius Caecilius Metellus the Elder (as well as Julia) is very skillful, as they are credible characters who could have existed but did not exist, since that they do not appear recorded in the family trees of the Caecilius Metellus and the Julia family.

It's time to talk about Lukács's famous “average hero.” According to this author, a character from a middle class or of very medium importance is the most prominent protagonist of historical novels:55

> The active bearer and center of this period painting is the “average hero” of the historical novel. Precisely those social and human traits that ban these figures from the drama or allow them to play only a subordinate and episodic role are those that qualify these figures to be placed at the very center of the composition of historical novels. For the relative confusion of the characterological contours, the absence of great passions that

54 P. Ricoeur (1983-1985), *Temps et récit III.* Paris: Seuil, p. 204.

> could lead to attitudes that are too partial and defined, their contact with the two sides in conflict, etc., all this makes them very appropriate to appropriately express in their own destiny the complex capillarity of fictional events.

This is not always the case, as we well know, but this resource helps the contemporary reader (generally also the average man) to identify more with the average hero than with an aristocratic character or one so dazzling in his historical transcendence that only From a megalomaniac point of view we could identify with him (it is natural for us to see Julius Caesar from below, with admiration and respect, but not as an equal or contemporary). Regarding this point, the novelists also play with Lukács' average hero, but some clarifications must be made in this regard: Diomedes the exquirer is a foreigner in Rome, and therefore belonging to a middle social stratum. low; Gordiano meets the novelistic requirements of the detective from a low social background, and it is easy to identify with his family troubles. In the case of Decius the Younger, although he belongs to a family of ancient ancestry and is going to grow on the social scale until he becomes, we assume, an important citizen, he is a character drawn with sympathy and devoid of any pomp or ostentation, so it is easy to identify with him through his lack of gravitas, and ultimately, because of his contemporaneity. Decio lives, in reality, like the average middle-class American, with all his limitations and advantages in the most powerful country on earth. In this regard, according to Spang (p. 103), we have a representation of the deterioration of the aristocracy, and therefore, a characteristic of the anti-illusionist novel, since the three authors oscillate between mockery and ironic disdain of the aristocratic or social classes. wealthy:

> However, as a general rule, the distribution of the illusionist novel accentuates the presence of figures from the upper classes, while the anti-illusionist novel gives preference to the middle and lower classes. It is notable how in historical novels of the transition period a balanced mixture of both classes is observed, but it is frequently

55 Georg Lukács (1977), *The historical novel.* Mexico: Era Editions, p. 152.

> It is precisely the decline of the aristocracy that becomes the theme or subtheme of the narrative.

It is precisely this subtheme of the decline of the aristocracy and the institutions of republican Rome that is one of the great themes of both Maddox and Saylor.

5.4. Time

Every historical novel, detective or not, is the recreation of a past time, and as such, it must necessarily be located on the calendar. In this case we have three authors who set their stories during the final years of the Republic, and each of them covers in their novels from a few days to a few months of that same period. To do this, naturally, the author will be forced to condense this linear time into a few chapters or to jump forward within the historical chronology, but without creating a great temporal abyss. Among Saylor's novels, for example, there is usually an ellipsis of years between one and the other (except after *Rubicon,* where the events of the civil war are compressed), an ellipsis that will allow Saylor to recover his characters at certain moments of his life through stories. In this aspect, all the novels adhere to the general use of time in the novel in general, mainly in the detective novel. In all three cases, the novelists evoke the past looking toward a known future, as is natural in this type of historical novel.

5. 5. Space

It is another important aspect for any novel, but especially for the historical one, since it could enter into severe contradictions with reality, and this almost never happens. The general space is Rome, 1st century BC, and within this spatial location the novelists have documented themselves through sources, art books or trips to Italy. Other secondary spaces, built from knowledge of general space, are Bayas, Cumae, Massilia, the countryside of Etruria, and as the most exotic, Alexandria and distant Colchis (in the latter case, most of it is fantasy). That is to say, in this aspect the authors follow the tendency of the historical novel to locate itself in multiple spaces.

But in addition, we have other types of spaces: mansions and private houses (such as that of Gordianus, that of Clodia in Saylor, that of the Pontifex Máximus in Maddox), temples and public buildings (the Curia, of which we have descriptions in Maddox and Saylor).
All of them are very important to grant verisimilitude to the novels, and for this the novelists prove to be well documented based on archaeological reconstructions and testimonies from the same sources.

5. 6. Language

This is, perhaps, the most controversial aspect of any historical novel, whether detective or not, since it covers the entire literary fabric and reaches its structure. The novelists write Gordianus, Decius and Diomedes not as novelists of Milesian fables or of a more underground literature such as the *Satyricon* (with which every crime novel is related due to the affinity, sometimes, of its atmospheres). , but as contemporary novelists well versed in the techniques of *best-selling* and detective intrigue consolidated since the times of Edgar Allan Poe. It is true that in this regard there is a total contradiction between what is told and what is told, but does the reading of Petronio's masterpiece seem so outdated to us today? The answer is obviously negative, and when we think about the extreme difference in styles between the Latin of the 1st century and the contemporary novel, we should rather take the *Satyricon* as a midpoint of reference and model (and even ancestor) of all detective or black narrative. modern, because in the *Satiricón* we find many of the elements that today are intrinsic to the best crime novel: the first-person narration, the sordid and dark environments, the characters of low social extraction, the expressionist painting of a world in decadence with a marked degradation of values, and criticism of the upper classes and the lavish and rude new rich. Thinking about this is more appropriate to defend this modern detective novel of antiquities than thinking about the models, today worn out by centuries of preponderance, such as those of Cicero, Pliny the Elder or Plutarch. In fact, the *Satyricon* is no stranger to certain drops of mystery and there is something in this very ancient work that today seems as modern to us (and perhaps more so, given that it has eternal aesthetic and narrative values) as all the crime novels of our time. . Isn't it emotionally modern, as it is known?

and heard so many times, the criticism in the museum against the triumph of mediocrity in art?56

In this regard, critics of the historical novel have proposed the use of archaizing language, but this has had its strong counter-criticism from others who, like Friedrich Hebbel, disdained this idea. Spang quotes it on p. 107, who in turn picks up Lukács' quote and summarizes it below:

> Therefore, according to Hebbel, it is not about slavishly reproducing the language of the country and the era or the figures; the historical novel is an evocation of an era from the past in a different time and, therefore, archaism would be an falsification, an anachronism, not a way to authenticate what is narrated. Only at first glance does the narrative discourse of the historical novel, by evoking an era from the past, or even more strikingly, by presenting foreign countries and stories, raise the need to imitate a foreign language and/or the evolution of language. It would be absurd to present the narrator and the figures of Joseph and his brothers by Thomas Mann, speaking in Canaanite and Egyptian. The authors normally find an intermediate solution, letting the narrator and his figures speak in the author's mother tongue and in the state contemporary to the creation of the novel and only occasionally introducing an archaizing or dialectal form so that both the dialogue of The figures and the narrator's interventions have an air of authenticity.

This opinion seems to be strongly supported theoretically, and if this matters a lot, it is what historical novel authors like Saylor, Maddox and Borrell do. To compensate for this cultural or mental anachronism, the authors resort to very detailed descriptions of strange or unknown places (the Curia, the grotto of the Sibyl of Cumae), and sometimes, to give an air of greater documentary seriousness or fidelity to the original language (Latin, in the case at hand), they present small intertexts. Saylor almost never resorts to these Latin words or Latin words; Sometimes he even allows certain anachronisms that usually go unnoticed (the mention in *Rubicon* of the Sicilian club or thread to strangle a man, as in *The American Friend* by Patricia Highsmith); On the other hand, all the novels

56 Cf. *Satyricon* 83-4.

by Maddox are full of Latin words, to the point that at the end of each of them there is a mini-dictionary where readers can look up the words in italics with their respective explanations. This trick, as old as historical literature itself and popularized by the albums of Asterix and others,57 aims to provide the novels with a cultural and period flavor that favors the general whole, although at times it may seem a bit strident.

As for language, although Borrell writes in Valencian (he himself translates into Spanish) and Saylor and Maddox do so in English, they sometimes introduce anachronisms with clarifying effects among the reading audience. It is still striking that Maddox mentions that Milo and Clodius are the two most notable "gangsters" *(sic)* in Rome, or that Davus, married to Gordianus's daughter, comments on discovering the corpse of Numerio in the courtyard of his house. Pompeyo: "This is going to fuck up Pompeyo a lot," *("Pompey will be mightily pissed"),* in the purest style of any Texas chick. They are, however, small details that do not generally affect well-constructed structures according to the most reliable models of modern genre literature which is, let us not forget, an eminently popular literature.

As can be easily seen, if the three novelists have produced works of the illusionist type to the extent of seeking to get the reader involved in the story and succumbing to the hypnosis of any well-constructed novel, they also use certain ingredients that could considered rather typical of the anti-illusionist novel. His works are, therefore, not only a mixture of novelistic genres, but also a mixture of ingredients from the kitchen of literature that has the objective of giving readers a good time according to Horacio's wise advice of *prodesse et delectare. :* instruct by delighting.

57 We think, for example, of the Nahuatl vocabulary that appears at the end of the albums from the *Quetzalcoatl series,* by Mitton (Ediciones Glénat).

The Valencian renaissance of the Latin detective novel. The contribution of Joaquín Borrell

It is paradoxical how, despite the fact that each time further reduces the importance of classical studies in secondary education plans, the presence of the world Greco-Latin in popular culture is consolidated over the years without ceasing to be a constant. I am referring to cinema, television, escape novels and comics, where classical culture continues to have a notable presence. The historical novel is not immune to this trend either, and although it has accompanied us throughout the 20th century, and even before, there is a new subgenre whose insistence in bookstores cannot be ignored.

I am referring to the Latin historical detective novel, new compared to other genres, but whose presence in the publishing market dates back, at least, to the novel *The Julius Caesar Murder Case* (1935).1 Although it is not possible to summarize here In the history of the genre, we can point out three fundamental periods: from 1935 to 1948, the period of the pioneers; from 1950 to 1979, marked above all by the constant presence of the short story writer Wallace Nichols, and which we can consider "the time of the classics"; and from 1981 to today, a period that we can consider of maturity of the genre, where the surprising emergence of authors and series occurs in the United States and other countries such as France, Germany, Italy and England. This is a list in which Spain seems not to be included, but is this really the case? In the lists that are handled, generally of Anglo-Saxon origin, we notice the absence of Joaquín Borrell, a Valencian author who in 1989 (the same year that Lindsey Davis edited the first installment of his Falco series

1 Wallace, Irwin (1935), *The Julius Caesar Murder Case.* New York-London.

2 Lindsey Davis (1989), *Silver Pigs.* London (Spanish edition [1991], La plata de Britannia. Barcelona: Edhasa).

Slave in Blue, a novel that includes Joaquín Borrell among the pioneers of this renaissance of the Latin detective novel.
In Spain, where the works of Lindsey Davis and others enjoy good sales, the Valencian Joaquín Borrell is an unknown pioneer whom we want to vindicate in his own land with a few lines.

Joaquín Borrell has a law degree and cultivates the historical novel with notable success. The two novels of Diomedes the exqui-riente (a neologism invented by Borrell himself to designate these detectives of the ancient world) belong to his first publishing period. We have already commented in previous pages on the general plot of the novels starring Diomedes, his uncle Alcimenes and the loyal Baiasca, so we refer to those pages of chapter 1 and do not insist on the topic again. Diomedes' novels are worthy of comment from many points of view, and above all they must be taken into account to vindicate Spain's lack of isolation in the renewal of a subgenre in which, it is true, later not even Borrell was abundant. nor other Spanish writers. Despite the brevity of his work, Borrell made a contribution that I consider important, and this is the invention of the word exquiriente, a neologism that resolves the artificiality that we feel when talking about characters in the style of Falco or Gordiano as “detectives” of the world.

Roman.

The word comes from the verb *exquiro,* which did not develop a life of its own in our language until Joaquín Borrell, with the nose of a bloodhound, introduced it to designate a new concept. And once grace has been granted, the question one asks is: does this freedom have any foundation? Was the verb exquiro ever used to designate the action of investigating as a modern detective would investigate? Diving into the numerous examples that Latin literature offers, we find interesting cases, of which we would like to bring a few to light. We have Plautus, who uses the verb exquiro several times and who in the comedy Truculentus integrates it into a dialogue that, due to its agility and rhythm, could have served as a model for Raymond Chandler, master of the American crime novel. We refer to verses 796-805, where Callicles interrogates a slave *(ancilla)* and a hairdresser *(sura tonstrix).* While questioning the hairdresser, she is interrupted by the slave, whose participation

pation ditch Callicles in vv. 801-802, with a blunt: “Abstain, except from what I ask you. / I inquire about you” *(Cave tu nisi quod te rogo. / Ex te exquiro).*

Although in Plautus the verb *exquiro* already appears in a clearly investigative, although comic, context, it will not be the only time that this author uses the word with the intention of investigating or interrogating in the sense of finding out something about someone: “It is what What I want to find out about you” *(Est quod volo exquirere ex te)* states Lysidamus in Casina 689, and not necessarily by the use of force, as we see in the dialogue between Pasicompasa and Lysimachus in Mercator 503: “PA. For Castor, my elder, speak. LI.
Find out what you want.”3 And we cannot omit what is perhaps the most famous investigation of all Plautus devised for his creatures, that of Amphitryon trying to unravel the mystery of his wife's infidelity in Amphitruus 1015-1016: “Now I will go to home and I will end up finding out from my wife / who was the one for whom her body has been filled with ignominy.”4

It is in Plautus where we find the oldest literary examples of exquiro, and from the beginning it was used with an investigative sense, as we see in many cases where we are told, for example, to investigate conscientiously: until "knowing the truth of the matters and investigating the dubious causes", as we are clearly told in the poem *Aetna,* 5 or "investigate in depth and unearth" as Quintiliano asserts through an other analogy with the exhumation very typical of criminal literature;6 and ultimately, investigate until the crux of the matter, as Flavio Carisio puts it: *medullas rei exquirere.* 7

In Tacitus we will find several interesting uses of the verb exquiro, one of them in *Annals* VI 8.4, with clear implications

3 Plautus, Casina 689: PA. I love ecastor, mei senex, eloquere. LY. Exquire quiduis.

4 Plautus, *Amphitruo* 1015-1016: Nunc domum ibo atque ex uxore hanc rem pergam exquirere, / Quis fuerit quem propter corpus suom stupri compleuerit.

5 *Aetna (Appendix Vergiliana)* 224: Nosse fidem rerum dubiasque exquirere Causes.

6 Pseudo-Quintilian, in *Declamationes minores* 329 2.1: Alte exquirendum atque eruendum.

7 Flavius Sosipater Charisius, *Artis grammaticae libri* V 406. 23.

criminal, since the historian tells us that it constitutes a crime to investigate the darkest thoughts of the emperor *(exqui-rere inlicitum, anceps).8*

This *actio exquirendi* could have two aspects: the physical and the intellectual. The first corresponded to the interrogation of suspects and the meticulous search of their personal belongings, while the second was related to the investigation of dark or criminal events. Within the first, physics, and within the interrogation of suspects, we find that these interrogations should not be simple formulaic questions, and so, in Tacitus *Ann.* III 16. 2 we have that Caesar orders M. Piso to be persistently interrogated *(crebris interrogationibus)* to confess what he did during the last twenty-four hours.9 In the same way, we will find another interrogation with criminal implications in Pseudo-Quintilian where We are warned that an alleged parricide, suspected of having poisoned his father, could argue as an alibi *(dissimulationem)* if questioned *(exquiritur)* the fact that he had not been found in possession of poison.10

Regarding the search of suspects and their personal belongings, we find that Cicero remembers in *De officiis* to King Thebe that before sleeping with his wife “he sent guards in advance

8 *Ann.* VI 8.4: “We see first of all the things that are obvious: who benefited from riches and honors from you, who held the greatest power to favor or punish, benefits that no one can deny that he received.
Sejanus; and as for the prince's hidden thoughts, if he plots something even more secretly, investigating it is illegitimate and dangerous” (Spec-tamus porro quae coram habentur, cui ex te opes honores, quis plurima iuvandi nocendive potentia, quae Seiano Fuisse nemo negaverit : abditos principis sensus, et si quid occultius parat, exquirere inlicitum, anceps).

9 *Ann.* III 16.2: “Caesar, his face changed by sadness, complained to the Senate that hatred had been sought against him because of such a death; orders that Marcus Piso be called, and by means of continuous interrogations, investigates what Piso did during the last day and night” (Caesar flexo in maestitiam ore suam invidiam tali morte quaesitam apud senatum conquestus M. Pisonem vocari iubet crebrisque interrogationibus exquirit, qualem Piso diem supremum noctemque exegisset).

10 M. Fabius Quintilianus (Pseudo), *Declamationes XIX maiores,* II 13.31: “If he is a parricide and is questioned, he will at least show this reason as an alibi: not being in possession of the poison” (Si parricide est et exquiritur, hanc saltem sibi praestabit dissimulationem, ne teneat venenum).

armed to search the women's chests and investigate whether there was a weapon hidden among the dresses."11

Our last Ciceronian example forces us to take a break from this historical character who has played so much role in the Latin detective novel. And Cicero, to inform his speeches, turned to men and women who became his eyes and ears, and in the novels of Steven Saylor he will frequently go to request the services of Gordian the Hound, a disenchanted demander of classical Rome. This idea is not far-fetched, since, when Cicero himself asks Atticus in his letters to exhaustively investigate everything he can about Lentulus and Domitius, his request will be introduced by the verb *exquiro,* as we see in *Letters* VIII 12.6: " I also want you to find out, with the greatest care that you are capable of, (you will certainly have through whom you can do it) what our Lentulus and our Domitius are doing, what they are about to undertake, how they are now conducting themselves, who they accuse or against whom They get angry."12

And Cicero was aware, either because of his forensic activity or because of his enormous political curiosity, that it was important to be well informed, and in this regard the speaker knew how to become a model of professional seriousness for future generations, who did not always imitate his steps. when it comes to investigating matters to the core, as can be seen from the harsh criticism that Quintilian would later direct against the orators, who preferred to be enthralled by rhetorical delicacies instead of investigating in depth before taking a case to trial. .13

11 Cicero, *De officiis:* Praemittebatque de stipatoribus suis qui scrutarentur arculas muliebres et ne quod in uestimentis telum occultaretur exquirerent.

12 Cicero, *Epist.* VIII 12.6: Volo etiam exquiras quam diligentissime poteris (habebis autem per quos possis) quid Lentulus noster, quid Domitius agat, quid acturus sit, quem ad modum nunc se gerant, num quem absent, num cui suscenseant. It won't be the only time you ask for your help. At least twice more Cicero will ask his friend Atticus for this favor, as in *Epist.* VIII 14.3 or XIII 49.2.

13 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* VII 1.41: "But the majority, after achieving a reputation for being eloquent, remain very content in adorned words, dedicating themselves little or nothing to the activities that are so useful for demonstration; the others do not think about investigating beyond these things that are obvious to the eye" (Sed plerique eloquentiae famem adfectantes contenti sunt locis speciosis moda vel nihil ad probationem conferentibus: alii nihil ultra ea, quae in oculos incurrunt, exquirendum putant).

The investigative zeal that Cicero demonstrated and that, in another order, Quintilian advocated in his *Institutio oratoria,* did not go much further, in the case of the orator, than resorting to unidentified informants, or to Atticus himself, to discover political intrigues or track down clues for their cases, although some would take it further to turn adultery into an investigation tool, as was the case of Octavius Augustus, who had the habit of sleeping with certain women to extract relevant information related to their husbands. This is what Suetonius tells us in *Divus Augustus* LXIX, 1: “It is true that he committed adultery several times, not even his friends deny it; But he committed it for this reason: to find out more easily, through each man's wife, what the decisions of his adversaries were."14

Finally, the verb *exquiro* was used to define the idea of investigating with scientific intent, as Pliny the Elder tells us in an interesting passage about King Juba as the discoverer of the source of the Nile, in *Naturalis Historia* V 52. 1: “ The Nile River, which rises from dubious sources, has its origin, as King Juba was able to discover, on a mountain in lower Mauretania, not far from the ocean, in a brimming lake.”15

In conclusion, the verb *exquiro* has an intimate connection with interrogation and investigation that are part of the deductive process that leads someone to unravel a mystery. It is a word that in Latin literature was used to interrogate and investigate and even to test in diverse contexts that include those that we could consider police or parapolice. Thus, the expression "antiquity detective", because it is forced and excessively modern, could well be banished to embrace the technical concept of exquiriente, which we could define as "a person who in the Latin detective novel performs tasks that today would correspond to modern detectives or police officers.” Playing with language and reality like a child, the Valencian Joaquín Borrell invented this word to designate an invented reality.

14 Suet., *Div. Aug.* 69.1: Adulteria quidem exercuisse ne amici quidem negant, excusantes sane non libidine, sed ratione commissa, quo facilius consilia aduer-sariorum per cuiusque mulieres exquireret.

15 *Nat. Hist.* V 52.1: Nilus incertis ortus fontibus, […] originem, ut Iuba rex potuit exquirere, in monte inferioris Mauretaniae non procul oceano habet lacu protinus stagnante.

Fortunately, since, if modern detective novels cannot change the reality of history, the word invented by Borrell does modify the reality of the language by being incorporated to designate a literary reality, not a historical one. From this point of view, Borrell's contribution to the entire subgenre, despite being humble, is worth its weight in gold, as it contains the subtlety of every nuance capable of unraveling a world.

CHAPTER 3

Public order in ancient Rome. A modern literary recreation

Since 1981, date of the novel's great worldwide success *The name of the rose,* by Umberto Eco, the novel historical police1 has become an important reference within the criminal genre, a genre that, since its creation by Edgar Allan Poe with the story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue,* has only evolved favorably to the present day. The historical detective novel was not Eco's invention, but the Italian writer's novel was the driving force behind a notable explosion of the genre that has since enjoyed a constant presence in bookstores around the world.2 One of the most lively branches of historical detective narrative is, precisely, that of classical Roman themes, within which two North American authors, Steven Saylor and John Maddox Roberts, have chosen the time frame of the end of the Roman Republic, whose decline and end are included between the years 79 and 44 BC Starting from the comments of these two authors we will try to reconstruct the truth from the lies, that is, make a balance between the historical police reality and the literary manipulation that it suffers when it is converted into a genre novel. To do this, on this occasion we will not address the popular figure of the detective, but rather we will focus on the recreation of the police aspects found in the novels of the two authors studied.

When we talk about detective novels with a classical Roman theme, we incur, due to our desire to catalog to make the genres and subgenres of literature understandable, a

1 As is well known, the term “police” does not mention, strictly speaking, the presence of police in this type of literature. Criminal narrative or detective narrative are also valid and equally widespread.

2 As we have already seen, we find some antecedents of this type of novels in *Nefertiti's Daughter,* by Agatha Christie, in the stories with classical Roman themes by Wallace Nichols, or in the medieval mysteries of Ellis Peters.

imprecision to which the name of detective novel with a classical Roman theme would not be alien. Indeed, the concepts of police and detective, although both have unequivocally classical roots, one Greek and the other Latin, are so modern that they are not enough to make understandable, except by approximation, what the ancient Greeks and Romans could have understood. by an internal protection body of the State, in the case of the police; or, in the case of the detective, what they could understand from an informant who works more or less under salary. However, since there were ancient equivalents of our police officers and detectives—as well as the popular image that emerges from them through genre novels and audiovisual culture—and, above all, since our novels use History to develop detective fantasies that fall within a literary genre as recognizable and popular as the police or detective novel - and we do not go into other subdivisions here such as mystery novels, enigma novels or crime novels - we will briefly address the rigor, invention and manipulation of historical reality that these novelists carry out to create their works of death and mystery.

Within the novels that concern us there seems to be a contradiction that never ceases to cause confusion: that sometimes the police are mentioned to say that they do not exist. That is to say, in an effort to make understandable to the reader what is being talked about, that in Rome there was no police force, the author puts into the mouth of a Roman of the time a word whose existence dates back to the 19th century. This paradox comes, of course, from specialized literature, and from it it is transported to this detective literature, but with the difference that in specialized literature a scholar more or less contemporary with us uses our terms to elucidate a reality. ancient. Thus, when Georges Hacquard or Theodor Mommsen explicitly mention the police function of the aediles,3 it does not create any kind of strange effect, but when Maddox puts the following outburst into the mouth of his character Decius Caecilius Metellus the Younger on page 29 from The Mystery of the Amulet: “W

3 Georges Hacquard (1995), *Guide to Ancient Rome.* Madrid: Palas Atenea, p. 64; Theodore Mommsen (1965), *History of Rome, I. From the foundation to the Republic.* Madrid: Aguilar (6th ed.), p. 371. These are two examples among many others.

no to fire control", we feel that something very delicate is wavering in our reception of the novel.

Did the police exist or not in ancient Rome? There was, of course, no police force as we understand it, but there were various bodies that attempted, as we have mentioned before, the internal security of the Roman State - the external security was exercised by the army, which was prohibited from accessing the city—4 and which to a certain extent justifies that the two aforementioned scholars, and many others, speak in their scholarly works of a police function in ancient Rome. We will make our own the words of the great scholar Moses Finley to begin to unravel this lengthy topic:

> The ancient city-state had no police other than a relatively small number of slaves, property of the state, at the disposal of the various magistrates, from archons and consuls to market inspectors, and in Rome the lictors, usually lower-class citizens. , at the service of the highest magistrates.
> Hardly surprising: the organized police force is a creation of the 19th century. But—and this is crucial and exceptional—the army was not available for large-scale police duties until the city-state was replaced by a monarchy.5

The logical question that any contemporary reader would ask when reading Finley is: and why did there not exist a police force, if it is so necessary? Perhaps the answer comes from the special emphasis that Finley makes when making it clear that the army did not participate in police duties until the city-state disappeared with the republican system and was replaced by that kind of monarchy that was first the principality and later the Empire, representing a single absolute power above

4 It is worth noting that this aspect is not forgotten in the novels. Thus, in JMR Mist 13 [see abbreviations in Bibliography], Decius comments to the reader: "Whoever you are, you must understand that at that time Rome, despite being the owner of half the world, was a place as wild as a town of pygmies in the Nile. Roman soldiers maintained order in hundreds of cities around our sea, but not a single one patrolled the streets of Rome. Tradition prohibited it."

5 Moses I. Finley (1990), *The Birth of Politics.* Mexico: Grijalbo, pp. 32-33 [The Nineties, 31].

of the others. It is Steven Saylor who, along these lines, makes an interesting reflection on pages 35-36 of his first novel, *Roman Blood:*

> Rome lacks a public order service. There is no municipal armed body to maintain order within the city walls. From time to time, a senator, fed up with so much violence, proposes creating a law enforcement service. The answer, from all sides, is immediate: whose police will it be? What a great truth! In a country ruled by a king, the loyalty of the police is due to the monarch. Rome, on the other hand, is a republic […]. In Rome, anyone scheming to be chief of police would use the position to increase their power, while the main dilemma for the servants of the law would be who to accept the larger bribe, and whether to serve that person or stab him for the back. The police would only serve as a tool for one faction to use against another.
>
> They would become just another band that the public would have to deal with. Rome prefers to live without police.

It is not surprising that it is Saylor, and not Maddox, who carries out this reflection. The biggest difference between the two writers lies in the fact that Saylor resorts to the recreation of the final years of the Republic in order to perform an exercise in interpreting contemporary North American political reality, confronting its common points with those of the time of Cicero and Caesar. While Saylor has a very critical vision of the political and ruling class, Maddox plays in his *SPQR* series (acronym, as is known, of *Senatus Populusque Romanus)* to make an Americanization of the Roman world for the greater glory of modern Rome, whose capital is in Washington. It is not difficult, knowing Saylor's fears about the effects of the palace intrigues of Washington and Wall Street, for the author to keep in mind the sinister and disastrous period of Edgar Hoover at the head of the FBI when he writes that "anyone who schemed to be chief of police, would use the position to increase his power," in clear reminiscence of Hoover's untouchable character and his ties to the mafia; or when he writes that the police "would only serve as a tool for one faction to use against another", which does not fail to remind us of the murky actions of Senator MacCarthy's witch hunt in the United States during the fifties, and th

roles that the police played during the Argentine or Chilean dictatorship of Pinochet. Not to mention the widespread corruption in the police in numerous countries that forces the population, as Saylor says, to see these forces as just another gang that the public must deal with day after day.

Having ruled out the army as a hypothetical police force, we are left, according to Finley, with the organization of various control bodies, analogous or not to our police, to exercise control over aspects that we sense to be more or less variable. Thus, Finley mentions the market inspectors, whose jurisdiction was as limited as their name, as he could also have reminded us that, in more ancient times, the censor also tried to exercise an almost police persecution of luxury at the table, in clothing or even sexual customs. Maddox also comments, between pages 144-145 of *The Sacrilege,* that the temple of Quirinus was guarded, but only at night, by guards under the orders of the patricians who were responsible for it as a brotherhood. However, Finley mentions the lictors, whom he defines as "citizens of lower classes, in the service of the highest magistrates." From here we will begin to unravel the ball.

In effect, the lictors were public officials who attended to the main Roman magistrates6 as well as their subordinates, and we will see this later, as long as they had the power to direct the army or *imperium* - not so in the case of the tribunes of the plebs-; They marched in a row in front of the magistrate, and the closest to him was the *primus lictor,* also called *proximus* because he was the one who went in front of the magistrate, chief of all, and was the one who directed the others in their tasks of arresting the criminals. -nals and tying their feet and hands during their arrest or at the time of punishment, since they acted as executioners when the condemned man was Roman.7 From this act of tying them - *ligare* - would come, according to Aulus Gellius, the noun lictors, in a explanation provided in his *Noctes Atticae:*

6 "Lictor", in William Smith (1875), *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities.* London: John Murray.

7 When he was a slave or a foreigner, his execution was carried out by the executioner called *carnifex,* a public official of such disastrous fame that he was not allowed to reside within the city. Cf. W. Smith, *op. cit.*

> Valgio Rufo, in the second of the books he wrote on topics requested by letter, says that the 'lictor' had been called that from the fact of 'liguring', because, as the magistrates of the people of Rome would have ordered that someone be whipped with rods, the legs and hands of this person used to be joined and tied, and this one, whoever from the college of viators had the duty of tying them, was called 'lictor'.8

Aulus Gellius's explanation is interesting not only because of its undoubted etymological interest, but also because the procedure described by Aulus Gellius is evoked by Maddox on page 280 of *The Catiline Conspiracy:*

> The reality was that Rome, at that time, did not have a police force or any mechanism to arrest and imprison large numbers of criminals. Ordinarily, when an arrest warrant was delivered, a praetor or curule aedile, accompanied by lictors, approached the subject and summoned him to court. The arrest itself was carried out by the lictors, using an ancient formula. If he encountered resistance, the magistrate summoned nearby citizens to help him and forcibly brought the arrested person to court.

Maddox also mentions two representative magistrates, the praetor or the curul aedile, who were accompanied by the lictors. Perhaps it would not hurt to do a minimum review of the different magistracies in order of importance, from highest to lowest, to place both in their proper place:9 consulate (two consuls with *imperium* and heads of the armed forces); praetura (two praetors with *imperium,* the *urbanus* and the *peregrinus;* the first was in charge of the administration of justice between citizens, and the second of justice between Romans and foreigners); censorship (without *imperium,*

8 *Night Attic.* XII 3: Valgius rufus in secundo liborum, quos inscripsit of recoming per epistulam quaesitis, “lighter” dicit a “ligand” Appellatum esse, quod, cum magistratus populi romani virgis quempiam Verbrari iussissent, crura eius et manus ligar isque, qui ex conlegio viatorum officium ligandi haberet, “lictor” sit appellatus.

9 For the order and attributes of the different magistracies, we will always follow José Manuel Roldán (1987), *History of Rome, volume I. The Roman Republic.* Madrid: Cátedra, pp. 136-140.

the censor made and controlled the list of citizens and, later, made the list of senators, from which their role as supervisors of morals and customs would end up emerging); aedility (four members, two curule councilors and two commoners who had tasks of a police nature within the city: control of streets, buildings and markets, responsibility for supplying food and organizing public games); tribunate of the plebs (ten members who looked after the interests of the people and presided over their assemblies or *plebis councils);* and, finally, quaestorship (lowest degree of the *cursus honorum,* consisting fundamentally of the administration of the public treasury in the number of up to twenty quaestors in Sulla's time who were in charge of the finances and accounts of Rome and the provinces) .

Once we saw that both the praetor and the curul aedile had powers of justice, there were also subordinate officials who worked under them, so it is important to take care of the latter, who under the generic name of vigintisexvirate grouped twenty-six men assigned to a certain number of schools. This vigintisexviratus was the previous step to the *cursus honorum* or political career, and as such, it had to be completed by the young man of good family who aspired to make merit after serving ten years in the army as a military tribune.10 Maddox refers to this *vigintisexviratus* with the name, invented by himself, of the Commission of Twenty-six, as we see on page 11 of *The Mystery of the Amulet,* in the lines that begin the saga of Decius Caecilius Metellus the Younger: “I received the captain of the vigiles in my atrium, like every morning since I was named a member of the Commission of Twenty-six.”

So, we already know that Decius is just beginning his political career, and a few lines below we will discover that the captain of the *vigiles* treats him with the rank of “commissar”, the same rank that Decius uses to refer to a colleague on the page 27 of *The Mystery of the Amulet.* But what school is Decius the Younger attached to? The vigintisexvirate was divided into groups of small-order officials who worked for various colleges: the *tresviri monetarys,* who were in charge of minting coins, and the *quattuor viri viarum curandum,* who carried out police work in the streets; the *duumviri viis purgandis,*

10 Roldán, *op. cit.* p. 140

who controlled the cleaning of the streets under the control of the councilors; Jurisdictional tasks were carried out by the *capital tresviri,* who assisted the magistrates with *imperium* and were responsible for capital executions; the *decemviri stlitibus iudicandis,* who judged the responses relating to the civil status of citizens; and, finally, completing the number of twenty-six, the *quattuorviri praefecti Capuam Cumas,* auxiliaries of the urban praetor and his representatives in Capua and Cumas.

On pages 26-27 of *The Mystery of the Amulet,* Decius is approached by a messenger from the Senate and will be forced to attend a very special meeting where we will be provided with more information and clues:

> —Are you Decius Caecilius Metellus, of the Commission of Twenty-six?
>
> —That's right, I responded with resignation. […]
>
> —On behalf of the Roman Senate and people you must appear at an extraordinary meeting of the Commission of Three to be held in the Curia.

The mention of the Commission of Three, a name again invented by Maddox, is a new clue that leads us to a question: if Decius belongs to the Commission of Twenty-six, and within it, to the Commission of Three, to which commission does he belong? ? There are two possibilities: either Decius is one of the monetary tresviri, or he belongs to the *capital tresviri.* The thematic turn that the meeting will take between pages 27 and 32, where the commission meets with Rutilio – commissioner of the Trans-Tiberian neighborhood – and Opimio – commissioner in turn of the Aventine, Palatine and Celio districts — will give us the answer: the murder of a freed gladiator is discussed, the fire of a warehouse on the banks of the river — to which Decius replies, as we have noted previously, that the fire has nothing to do with them, because it belongs to the police and no to fire control—and, introducing the case of the novel, the murder of an Asian Greek named Paramedes and co-owner of the warehouse. At this point, and without fear of being mistaken, we believe that Decius Caecilius Metellus and his two companions Opimius and Rutilius, the Commission of Three, constitute the body of the *capital tresviri.*

The creation of the body of the *capital tresviri* is certainly archaic, since Mommsen places it in the monarchy, giving them the

rank of commissioners and framing them as a group among some others that depended directly on the king. The German scholar calls them the Three Men of the Night *(tresviri nocturni or capitals)* and explains that they later served as security police, night fire police, and execution surveillance.

While Mommsen will discuss the evolution of this body later (pages 541-542), which appears to blend murder investigation powers with some oversight of fire forecasting work, we believe that the nature of the Commission of Three It is this: investigation of causes of death, very possibly for the urban praetor.

The *capital tresviri or triumviri* have left only a faint trace in Roman literature, and this makes them much more mysterious and disturbing due to the lack of definition with which their functions are presented. They are mentioned as *capital tresviri* in two comedies by Plautus, *Amphitryon* and *Asinaria.* In *Asinaria* (vv. 129-132) we see from the text that the *tresviri* had the power to incriminate, which is clear from Argiripo's statements: “Look at throwing me out of the house! Is this the payment you give me for having behaved as I have behaved? You are bad to those who are good to you, and to those who are bad, you are good; But you are going to pay me, because I am going now straight to the Tresviros, and I will give your names there and it will cost you your head.”11

They incriminated, and in addition, they had the power to take me to prison, as can be seen from verse 155 of *Anfitrión:* “Let's see what I would do now, if the tresviros took me to prison”,12 where we also see clues provided by the character from Sosia that they would take him out of prison the next day to be beaten by eight individuals, from which we deduced that they could order torture with impunity.

But without a doubt the most dramatic participation is the one they had, following Sallust, in the execution of Lentulus in the *Catiline Conjuration,* where they lead the former consul to death and we are told of his sad end in chapter LV:

11 Plautus, *Asin.* 129-132: At malo cum tuo: nam iam ex hoc loco / Ibo ego ad tresuiros uostraque ibi nomina / Faxo erunt: capitis te perdam ego et filiam, / Perlecebrae, permities, adulescentum exitium.

12 Plautus, *Amph.* 155: Quid faciam, never if you tresuiri me in prison compegerint?

> After the Senate joined Cato's sentence, the consul, considering that it was best to anticipate the night that was already approaching, lest any uprising be renewed during it, ordered the triumvirs to prepare everything. necessary for execution. Once the guards were established, he personally led Lentulus to prison, and the praetors acted in the same way with respect to the other conspirators. As you ascend to the left from the Forum, there is a place in the prison called Tulliano, sunk into the ground about twelve feet. It is secured by walls on all sides, and at the top, a vaulted ceiling joined with stone arches; Due to the neglect, the darkness, the foul smell, the appearance of this place is terrible. Once Lentulus was lowered to this place, the executioners of the capital punishment, who were carrying out orders, broke his throat with a noose.13

Strangulation with a noose was the characteristic form of execution, to the point that Tacitus, in *Annals* VI 9.2, calls it "triumviral execution" to refer to the sinister episode of the execution of Sejanus' little daughter. But we must not confuse them with the executioners, who were not and which is something that is very explicit in the Salustian text when the author mentions the executioners *(vindices,* in the original text), but apparently those who attested to the execution after incriminating a man, locking him in jail, condemning him to death and, finally, witnessing with his presence the successful completion of the execution.14

13 Sallust, *Bell. Cat.* 55: Postquam, ut dixi, senatus in Catonis sententiam discessit, consul optumum factu ratus noctem, quae instabat, antecapere, ne quid eo spatio novaretur, tresviros, quae supplicium postulabat, parare iubet. Ipse praesidiis dispositis Lentulum in carcerem deductit; idem fit ceteris per praetores. Est in carcere locus, quod Tullianum appellatur, ubi paululum ascenderis ad laevam, circiter duodecim pedes humi depressus. Eum muniunt undique parietes atque insuper camera lapideis fornicibus iuncta; sed incultu, tenebris, odore foeda atque terribilis eius facies est. In eum locum postquam demissus est Lentulus, vindices rerum capitalium, quibus praeceptum erat, laqueo gulam fregere.

14 Other explicit mentions of this body are found in the variant of the *capital triumviri.* Titus Livy informs us in XXXII 26. 17 of *Ab urbe condita* of his mission to guard the prison, and in XXXIX 14. 10, he makes clear the function of his night watches, which included the prevention of fires. Livy himself will present them to us "in action" (that is, directing an arrest) in XXXIX 17. 5, as Quintus Asconius Pedianus also tells us in chap. XXXII of his comments on Cicero's speeches the hunt and capture of a fugitive. Finally, we owe Valerius Maximus, in his *Sayings and Memorable Deeds* VIII 1. 6, the news that a nocturnal triumvir named Publius Villius was prosecuted for negligence and neglect of his nocturnal mission.

Other recent definitions of the task of the *capital tresviri* are close to the vision that Maddox has of these dark characters, such as that of Agustín Millares Carlo,15 who says that “they were in charge of guarding the prisons and directing the execution.” ”.
Other definitions, even closer in time, absolutely support the recreation that Maddox carries out of these characters, as is the case of Manuel Díaz y Díaz: “Auxiliaries of civil and criminal justice; They made the arrests, guarded the prison and attended the executions. They were also in charge of the night police and fire relief.”16

Another aspect is the already mentioned vigils between pages 11-13 of The Mystery of the Amulet, where a group of them comes to report on the events that occurred during the night.
From the captain's report we are given to understand that these vigiles inform Decio of the murders and nocturnal riots, as well as the fires, that take place in the Subura, a neighborhood of which Decio is commissioner in the first novel of the series. We are aware of the existence of a body of night vigils, but not very well organized. Thus, on page 112 of *Satur-nalia,* Maddox puts it in Decius's mouth: “The primitive organization of vigiles that we had in those days did not extend beyond the walls of the city. They weren't very efficient inside the walls either, by the way.”

On page 280 of *The Catiline Conspiracy,* Maddox gives us an interesting piece of information that should be expanded upon:

> In these days of the First Citizen, whose reorganization of the vigiles has turned them into a true and very effective police force, it is worth marveling that so many public enemies roamed at will during a state of emergency and that Catiline and numerous of his henchmen escaped from the city without problems.

The First Citizen, that is, Augustus, created in the year 6 AD (or completely restructured) the body of *vigiles,* due to the large number of fires that occurred in Rome, but apparently these night watchmen did not become a body

15 Sallust (1944), *Catiline Conspiracy.* Mexico: UNAM (2nd edition, 1991).

16 Sallust (1974), *Catiline Conspiracy.* Latin text with juxtalinear translation, literary version and historical vocabulary. Madrid: Gredos (8th reprint, 1997).

very effective in preventing fires, since these did not stop occurring, with unfortunate consequences, during the history of the city.17 Even so, in addition to fire prevention, they had some police competence, as Friedlaender remembers:18

> In Rome there existed since the year 6 AD an urban police force (vigiles) that acted at the same time as a fire brigade, formed by seven cohorts (of a thousand men), each of which was in charge of two districts of the city. city and had a guard unit in each of them, and whose patrols undoubtedly walked the streets of their jurisdiction, illuminated by torches.
> But this did not prevent insecurity from being great at all times and robberies and assaults being the order of the day.

With the Augustan reforms alluded to by Maddox would come some changes regarding policing of the city.
Thus, the aediles would retain jurisdiction over the markets, but the supply of wheat and the police function would be transferred to the imperial administration.19 The specific competence of fire prevention would be transferred to an independent official who would receive the name *praefectus vigilum.* twenty

The performance of Decius Caecilius the Younger as *tresvir* of the Commission of Three will be brief, since in the second novel he will have ascended a new rank in the *cursus honorum* by being named *quaestor* of the treasury, and in the third of the series he reaches the rank of senator. . It is a pity that Maddox, for the benefit of the increasingly important political presence of his character Decius the Younger, has not insisted, for longer, on this very ancient and obscure role of representative of public order in ancient Rome, a character so overshadowed by the mystery of the lack of data that it is, from a novelistic point of view, more than suggestive.

17 An interesting summary of the most important and disastrous fires that the city of Rome experienced throughout its history can be seen in Ludwig Friedlaender (1947; 1st reprint. 1984), *Roman society.* Mexico: FCE, pp. 25-27.

18 *Ibid.,* p. 24.

19 José Manuel Roldán Hervás, José María Blázquez and Arcadio del Castillo (1995), *History of Rome. Volume II. The Roman Empire.* Madrid: Cátedra, p. 56.

20 *Ibid.,* p. 59.

CHAPTER 4

Greek fantastic beings for an interpretation of the history of Rome

In 1981, the worldwide success of *The Name of the Rose,* by Umberto Eco, spread due to its similarity to a subgenre of the detective novel that until then had appeared as a rare curiosity in the catalogs of the genre: the historical detective novel. Although at that time the subgenre already existed as such and antecedents were told such as *Nefertiti's Daughter* - which Agatha Christie set in ancient Egypt -, the Roman stories of Wallace Nichols or the medieval mysteries of Ellis Peters, to give just three examples , the vein was only opened when Eco's work captivated a reading public that discovered, mainly, that it was possible to get carried away by a mystery plot set in a time distant from ours, and at the same time, learn while delighti From that moment on, authors of historical detective novels proliferated, mainly in the Anglo-Saxon market, and the reader interested in antiquities can today enjoy series set in Pharaonic Egypt, ancient Rome or the Middle Ages, although modern novelists address other areas and times.

On this occasion we are going to start from the comments of the American novelists John Maddox Roberts and Steven Saylor to try to reconstruct the truth from the lies, that is, to make a balance between historical or cultural reality and the literary manipulation that it suffers when it is converted into a genre novel. To do this, on this occasion we will focus on the recreation of some of the characters of Greco-Roman mythology in these works, following two main axes: the chronological one, provided mainly by the work of Antonio Ruiz de Elvira,1 and the genealogical one, for which we will remain fundamer

1 Antonio Ruiz de Elvira (3rd reprint 1995), *Classical mythology.* Madrid: Gredos.

mind the pictures that in this regard appear in the work of Pierre Grimal.2 In both cases, always checking with the classical authors, mainly poets, starting with Homer.

Before beginning the exposition we emphasize that, throughout the novels studied, we have not found that the gigantic mythological corpus, with all its interrelation of characters giving rise to all kinds of episodes, legends and heroic cycles, has a relevance in itself in this genre of novels. On the contrary, the protagonists of mythology, both major and minor gods and heroes, have rather a colorful representative function, without the mythological story having importance in itself or being recreated in any work for literary purposes.

Rather, myths within novels have more than anything the mission of functioning, generally, as similes or analogies in most cases, and in others, as personifications. That is to say, the myth almost always works by allusivity. However, we have found three cases in which the mythical character serves to promote an interesting historical reflection whose interest cannot be ignored. In the following pages we will explain who these characters are and what use the authors make of them.

1. Nemesis

From Nemesis we have, in principle, its double aspect as divinity and abstraction. As divinity, in the legend of her loves with Zeus, whose fruit was Helen and the Dioscuri and which others attribute to Leda.3 As an abstraction, Nemesis is called by Hesiod “calamity for mortal men” in Theogony 223, which does not seem leave room for doubts about the negative character assigned to it. In his *Works and Days,* however, within the description of the iron race, Hesiod himself states that, among many other calamities, this era is characterized because Edos (Honesty, translated by Ruiz de Elvira) and Nemesis have abandoned the earth to head to Olympus, with the logical consequence: “The mournful sorrows will remain/for mortal men, and against evil there will be no help” (in *Works and Days* 200-201).

2 Pierre Grimal (1994), *Dictionary of Greek and Roman mythology* (7th reprint). Barcelona: Paidós.

3 In Apollodorus, *Library* III 10. 7, we already find news of this confusion.

It seems that the interpretation of Nemesis oscillates between the ideas of justice and divine vengeance, concepts of apparent similarity, but in reality opposed. Meanwhile, for Ruiz de Elvira, Nemesis gives each person what they deserve and relates his name to the verb *némein* (distribute) and the noun *nómos* (law),4 for Grimal

> […] he personifies, in effect, divine vengeance […] the power responsible for suppressing all excess, such as, for example, the excess of happiness in mortals, the pride of kings, etc. […] Everything that rises above its condition, both in good and evil, is exposed to the reprisals of the gods. It tends to upset the order of the universe, to endanger the universal balance; That is why it should be punished if it you want the world to continue as it is is.5

Both ideas seem to merge in the chapter that the Spanish Pérez de Moya—who in his *Secret Philosophy6* compiled knowledge from Boccaccio, Conti and the Vatican mythographers —dedicates the divinity in his aforementioned work, specifically in III 17:

> Nemesis was a goddess who showed everyone to do what is good, and challenged what was evil, for which she was called the daughter of Justice, and was worshiped as the avenger of Justice. They painted her with a bit in her hand to denote that she faced evil desires, and they considered her to be the goddess of revenge.

Within this oscillation, Martin P. Nilsson's idea in *History of Greek Religiosity is clarifying,* 7 which begins by reviewing nemesis in reaction to *hubris* and remembers that we already find these two words in Homer: *"Hybris*
It is arrogance in words and deeds, pride, proud conduct; *nemesis* is the indignation provoked by *hubris"* (p. 63). Later, on p. 65, the author states that the ideas of *hubris* and *nemesis*
were transformed to express the existence of a justice

4 Grimal, *op. cit.,* p. 62.

5 *Ibid.,* p. 375 BC

6 Juan Pérez de Moya (1995), *Secret Philosophy* (edition by Carlos Clavería). Barcelona: Cátedra [Hispanic Letters, 404].

7 Martin P. Nilsson, *History of Greek religiosity.* Madrid: Gredos.

leveler between happiness and misfortune and then goes on to recall Herodotus (I 207. 2) when he states that there is a rotation in the vicissitudes of human life, a rotation by which it is not possible for a man to be permanently happy. Nilsson concludes his reasoning on the same page by writing:

> What was the basis for this impossibility? The archaic era lived with the conviction that pride was punished with the corresponding measure of suffering; hubris was arrogance, pride. But it had to be recognized that a man could enjoy happiness without showing pride. That is why hubris was considered even the mere fact of being happy or, perhaps better, the awareness of being in
> possession of happiness.8

Both ideas of justice and revenge appear in two of the novels studied. In fact, in *The Slave in Blue,* by Joaquín Borrell, the same sculptural representation of divinity becomes, with the help of superstition, the main suspect in a crime. In JB Azul 44, Domitilla, the daughter of Elio Manlius Helveticus, tells Diomedes that she found her father murdered with a dagger stuck in his chest at the foot of a statue of the terrible Nemesis.

> —[…] Are there any suspects?
> "Yes," said the patrician, "Nemesis."
> —I'll start by questioning her. Where you live?
> —On Olympus—I thought he was alluding to some neighborhood in Rome.
> -Where is that?
> —I mean Mount Olympus. She is the goddess of revenge.

Leaving aside the comedic tone that characterizes Borrell's novels, the assignment to Nemesis of his vengeful rather than vigilante role is evident, at least for now.

Below, the aforementioned Domitila says that that same morning her father had received from a friend the gift of a statue of Venus with the motto *May peace and happiness always reign in this house,* but that when they heard their father's cry and they entered the room, “Venus had disappeared

8 The emphasis is ours.

and in its place was a horrible representation of the goddess Nemesis, with a threatening expression and her face contorted into a grimace of anger. And on the pedestal it read: *The vengeance of Noviodunum has reached you."*

On the next page we learn that Groom-dunum's revenge consists in the fact that Aelius Manlius commanded a cohort, in the war of the Helvetians, which was surrounded by five thousand barbarians. Although he was the only one to survive and crossed the enemy lines covered in wounds, it was all a hoax, as his daughter confesses embarrassedly, since he sold his comrades in arms in exchange for saving his life.

The revenge of Nemesis, then, begins to acquire tones of poetic justice. Finally, the mystery of the supposed punishment of Nemesis is resolved as a revenge of the actor Laurentius, brother of one of the victims of Noviodunum, who in turn is the lover of the widow of Elio Manlius. Aelius Manlius had his just *nemesis* by having committed the *hubris* of believing that his own life alone was more important than the lives of all his men.

It will be Arsinoe, Cleopatra's sister, who in JB Azul 164-165 state that

> The spirit does not admit prisons and […] the will to fight, supported by two powerful forces, can be enough to keep it untamed. […] Two forces as old as humanity and at the same time young and seductive. You, the Greeks, knew how to capture them in your Olympic goddesses: Nemesis and Aphrodite, revenge and love.

Although, in JB At 30, Borrell will remember this imputation of vengeful murder to the goddess Nemesis, it will not be until *The Arm of Justice* (Spanish translation of *Arms of Nemesis,* by Steven Saylor) when the goddess appears mentioned again with a charge more just and less vengeful, at least in appearance.
In Saylor's novel, Nemesis seems to embody more the values of Roman Justice and fits better with Ruiz de Elvira's idea, although this author recognizes more active functions in the goddess than those of the Fates, but also more imprecise ones. .9

In this novel, Gordiano the Hound is hired to investigate the reasons for the murder of Lucius Licinius, Marcus's cousin.

9 Ruiz de Elvira, *op. cit.,* p. 62.

Licinius Crassus10 and administrator of his possessions in Bayas. Gelina, his widow, knows that all the clues point to two slaves who escaped on the same night of the crime, and Crassus has no qualms about condemning the rest of the slaves on the estate to death, ninety-nine in total, to set an example. However, Gelina cannot believe in the guilt of the two fugitives, and hires Gordiano to carry out his investigations to save the lives of all the slaves.
In the end, Gordianus will discover alive Alexandros, one of the slaves and lover of the painter Olympias, and the reasons for his escape: Alexandros knows the true identity of the murderer, who is none other than Faustus Fabius, an important general of Crassus who, in collusion With Lucius Licinius, he sold weapons to the Spartacist rebels against whom Crassus awaits permission to fight with his own army. Thus, Fausto Fabio is not only a man who has become illicitly enriched, but also a traitor.

In SS Just 290, Crassus and Gordianus review the reasons that led Fabius to try to kill Gordianus:

> —Until the night of your arrival he was not able to do what he had planned: slip to the pier shed and throw the weapons into the water. He had wanted to do it the nights before, but someone had always interrupted him or seen him, and he couldn't risk doing it. In reality, I think he was acting overly cautious, but your arrival forced him to make up his mind... And you caught him red-handed! If he had stabbed you it would have looked like a second murder, so he tried to drown you.
> —But it failed.
> -Yeah. Fabio told me that from that moment he knew that you were the arm of justice. The arm of Nemesis.
> "Nemesis has many arms," I said, thinking of everyone who had contributed to discovering Fausto Fabius: Mumio, Gelina, Iaia, Olimpia, Alexandros […]

Thus, we have that Gordianus the hound is considered by Crassus the arm of Nemesis. In some way we can understand that this explicit analogy leaves Gordianus as the executor of an idea

10 Marcus Licinius Crassus (115-153 BC) was one of the most prominent political figures of the Roman Republic of the 1st century BC. Among his many victories, there is also the subjugation of Spartacus and his army in 73 BC. As a businessman, he accumulated a immense fortune. He died commanding his army against the Parthians, in June 53 BC

of justice, which could link the mention of Nemesis with the Roman Justice or Astrea, but in reality the arm of Nemesis as a repairer of *hubris* is not Gordianus, but Marcus Licinius Crassus himself.

Crassus is very clear that he plans to avoid scandal and there will be no trial in Rome for the murder of Lucius, but he has an atrocious end in store for Fabius: he makes him one of the five hundred victims of the tithe11 that he organizes to punish the flight of men of the two legions commanded by Marcus Mummius against Spartacus in SS Just 299-301.

As for the ninety-nine slaves who were saved at the last minute by the intervention of Alexandros, Olympias' lover, they were resold to other owners, since he considered that he could not trust them in the future. Despite the attempts of Olympias and Marcus Mummius to buy Alexandros, Crassus flatly refuses, arguing that he could be called to testify about the death of Lucius in a hypothetical trial against Fabius, in SS Just 293.

Alexandros' fate is terrible: sold as a galley slave, he dies chained to the oars when the ship *La Furia* sinks after a pirate attack. Crassus is, here too, a vengeful arm of Nemesis since, although Alexandros is not guilty of anything, he does seem marked by tragic fate as condemned to death.

Alexandros cannot live, and in his death, Crassus executes his revenge: having deprived him with his intervention of the exemplary punishment of the death of ninety-nine slaves as a lesson in Roman *gravitas* and, ultimately, having deprived him of the pleasure of exhibiting himself. before the Romans—always for political purposes and never for justice, of course —as a model of righteousness.

We believe that the following dialogue with the Hound not only supports this theory, but in itself is a perfect exponent of the vision that the novelist Steven Saylor has of a character as important as Crassus, as we see in SS Just 292-293 :

—And tonight Fausto Fabio would be free of all suspicion.
"Yes," Crassus sighed, "and all the inhabitants of the Crater would tell

11 The tithe was an ancient punishment measure of the Roman army, but it had long been rejected due to its high cruelty. However, Crassus dared to resurrect her. The tithe consisted, as its name suggests, of executing one in ten soldiers considered guilty of treason or cowardice.

wonderful stories about the glorious spectacle organized by Marcus Licinius Crassus, stories that would have reached Rome and Spartacus's camp at Thurium.

—And ninety-nine innocent slaves would be dead.
Crassus looked at me in silence and smiled lightly.
—Gordian, I also believe that you are the arm of justice. Your work here has fulfilled the will of the gods. If not by the whim of the gods, how is it possible that I am here tonight, drinking the last bottle of my cousin's excellent Falerno wine with the only man in the world who believes that the life of ninety-nine slaves is more important than the ambitions of the richest man in Rome?

Starting from Nilsson's idea that *hubris* was not only happiness but the belief in being happy, the deaths of Lucio and Fabio respond perfectly to the idea of a leveling Nemesis, leaving the sad fate of Alexandros to a crueler Nemesis: that which comes to punish, precisely, the moments of happiness that the slave spent with Olympia and, also, the fatuous illusion of future happiness when the personality of the true murderer of Lucius Licinius is revealed, thus confirming that old maxim of absolute pessimism that Cicero *(Tusculanas* II 48.114) was collected from the lips of Silenus when he wanted to reward Midas's generosity with a pearl of wisdom: much better for man not to be born, or to die as soon as possible.

2. The dog Cerberus

Phorcys fathered Echidna, although this character is of doubtful maternal filiation.12 Echidna had three children with Typhoeus - in Hesiod *(Theogony* 821-822), the last son of Gaia with Tartarus -: Ortho, Cerberus and the Hydra of Lerna, from of which the most famous is the Cerberus dog.

In JMR Mist 275, the author presents it to us only to carry out a simile: “It was as dark as the bowels of Cerberus,” a simile that is nothing more than a recreation of our popular expression of darkness “like a wolf's mouth.” .

In JMR Sat 189, a prophetess tells Decius Caecilius Metellus the Younger: “You are the favorite of Pluto, his hound to hunt down the guilty,” in a clear analogy of Cerberus as the guard dog.

12 Cf., in this regard, Ruiz de Elvira, *op. cit.* pp. 46-47.

dian of Hades who guards the entrance and chases those who try to escape with Decius's ugly habit of sticking his nose into what doesn't matter to him.

However, it will be in two other novels where Cérbero has, if not a real or figurative role, then a notable mention.
We are referring to *The Arm of Justice,* by Steven Saylor, and *The Sacrilege,* by John Maddox Roberts.

In SS Just 59 we have, to begin with, a representation of Cerberus as a hook that would have no relevance if it were not for the fact that his figure has greater importance as an element of superstition among the inhabitants of the Mouth of Hades, in Cumae, as we will see later.

Marcus Mummius and Gordianus the Hound go to the bathrooms of the house where the action of the novel takes place, and the author says: “Mummius stretched to reach a bronze hook nailed to the wall and which had the shape of the heads of Cerberus. . He hung the sandals on two heads and the belt in the open jaws of the third.”

We know well that the mention of Cerberus as a three-headed dog is not the oldest, since Hesiod mentions fifty in *Theogony* 310-312, but we know that in Latin literature it is the most established. Thus, we have Propertius (Elegies III 5 44-5) who says: “The infernal den watches over Cerberus with its three heads” *(tribus infernum custodit faucibus antrum / Cerberus);* and Virgil, who mentions the three-headed can twice *(Georgicas* IV 483): “and Cerberus had three heads with open jaws” *(tenuitque inhians tria Cerberus ora)* and also in *Aeneid* VI 417-8: “The gigantic Cerberus rules these kingdoms with His three-mouthed bark makes the cruel one resonate, lying on the opposite side of the cave” *(Cerberus haec ingens latratu regna trifauci / personat adverse recubans immanis in antro).* Later, Hyginus does not hesitate to say that he had three heads.13 Thus, Saylor conforms to the Latin literary tradition by naming Cerberus as the three-headed dog.

In SS Just 142, Olympias leads Gordianus the Hound to the Mouth of Hades, in Cumae, where it is believed that one of the mouths of Avernus exists, and the superstitious locals believe that Cerberus prowls around those surroundings: “They say that Cerberus, the watchdog of Pluto, from time to time he breaks loose and escapes into the world of

13 CLI *Fables .*

the surface. A farmer from Cumae told me that he had heard the monster in the forests of Avernus and that the three heads howled in unison under the light of the full moon.

There is no doubt that here Saylor plays with the distorted memory (in the fiction of the locals) of the twelfth labor of Hercules, when he descended to Hades to bring Cerberus to earth and subsequently brought him back, a famous episode of which he gives Apollodorus tells in *Library* II 5. 12 and to which Saylor directly alludes in SS Just 160, when mentioning one of its consequences. Thus, carrying out an inspection of the room where Iaia the painter and Olimpia prepare their pigments, Gordiano is warned by the two women's slave.

> "Be careful and don't stick your nose in those bowls," he said. Some contain poisonous powders.
> "Yes," I agreed, "I've seen wolfsbane before." They say that he was born from the foam of Cerberus when Hercules took him out of hell. That is why it grows near the gates that lead to hell, like the Mouth of Hades. According to what I have been told, it is good for killing vermin...
> or people.

Aconite is alluded to by Ovid in a veiled way in two verses of Metamorphoses. IV 500-501, where it says that Tisiphon "had also brought with her wonders of liquid poison / foam from the mouth of Cerberus and poison from Echidna" (attulerat secum liquidi quoque monstra veneni, / oris Cerberei spumas et virus Echidnae).
But only later does the poet give the complete story, in book VII of the same work, so Saylor sticks to the legend of the origin of aconite as it has been transmitted to us in Metamorphosis VII 406-409 :

> To her misfortune, Medea mixes what she had once brought with her: aconite from the coasts of Scythia. They remember that aconite was born from the teeth of the dog that was the son of Echidna. There is a dark grotto in a dark abyss, there is a sloping path along which the Tirynsian hero dragged Cerberus, who resisted and twisted his eyes against the day and the bright rays; Imprisoned with chains made of steel and excited by rabid anger, he filled the air with three simultaneous barks and splashed white foam over the green fields.
>
> They think that these foams curdled, and after acquiring food from the favorable and fertile soil, they received the power to cause harm.

> These, because they were born from hard and long-lived rock [caute], the peasants call aconite.14

Much more important is the appearance, in dreams, of the dog Cerberus before Decius the Younger in chapter X of the novel *The Sacrilege.* In this case, the implications of this premonitory dream are fundamentally political, and ultimately became very important for the history of Rome.

Attacked by Publius Clodius and his thugs in chapter X, Decius manages to save himself although with a good number of bruises. From his father's house, Decius is transported by litter to the temple of Aesculapius, where his friend Asclepiodes will heal his wounds. During the course of the journey, Decius has a dream in which he sees Clodia, Fausta and also Julia Minor.15 In the dream, he also distinguishes the deceased Appius Claudius Nero who tries, unsuccessfully, to give him something very important. Later, between pages 197-205, we will discover the first contribution of the revelatory nature of the dream, which in this novel operates in the same way as Gordianus' dream with the Minotaur in The Enigma of Catilina. Decius discovers that Claudius was murdered when he was on his way home to deliver an important message, a message that along with other belongings his slave Hermes stole and kept hidden in his room.

But let's return to the dream with the dog Cerberus, at the very moment when he attacks the ghost of Appius Claudius. This is how Maddox tells it:

> It was a four-legged beast that towered over him, and its great claw descended to crush him before he could hand over whatever it was about to me. I raised my eyes and saw that the beast was Cerberus,

14 *Metamorphoses* VII 406-419: Huius in exitium miscet Medea, quod olim / attulerat secum Scythicis aconiton ab oris. / illud Echidnaeae memorant e dentibus ortum / esse canis: specus est tenebroso caecus hiatu, / est via declivis, per quam Tirynthius heros / remainderm contraque diem radiosque micantes / obliquantem oculos nexis adamante catenis / Cérberon abstraxit, rabida qui concitus ira / inplevit pariter ternis latratibus auras / et sparsit virides spumis albentibus agros; / has concresse putant nactasque nourishes feracis / fecundique soli vires cepisse nocendi; / quae quia nascuntur dura vivacia caute, / agrestes aconita vocant. On the etymology of the word aconite, vid. note 818 of the Álvarez-Iglesias translation.

15 The dream, and in relation to it, cf. JMR Sac 169-172.

> the watchdog of the underworld. He knew this because, unlike ordinary dogs, this one was gigantic and had three heads.

Up to this point, everything fits with the image that has traditionally been transmitted to us of Cerberus, although without mentioning, neither in this passage nor in the next, the dragon's tail or the heads of all kinds of snakes spread across its back, details that we find in the aforementioned fragment of Apollodorus. In the other details it agrees with the traditional image: a gigantic dog with four legs and three heads, whose role as guardian of the underworld stands out. But then the image of Cerberus deviates from that transmitted by classical authors, and Maddox incurs symbology:

> However, they were not dog heads, but human heads, like one of those hybrid Egyptian deities. The head on the right was that of Crassus, who looked at me with his cold blue eyes; The one on the right was the jovial head of Pompey; The one in the center was in the shadows and I couldn't recognize her, but I knew that this was the leader of the other two; If not, why was it in the center?

Upon waking up, Decius tells Asclepiodes the dream, and they both have the following conversation:

> —The appearance of a mythological monster always has the greatest meaning. Does the dog Cerberus have a meaning for you that it does not have among the Greeks?
> "None that I know of," I said. He is the watchdog of Pluto, who prevents the dead from leaving the underworld, or the living from entering.
>
> —So Pluto. How is it different from Hades?
> —Well, in addition to being the lord of the dead, he is also the god of wealth.
>
> —He is also a god among us, and with the same name: Pluto. Perhaps it comes from confusion with Pluto, the son of Demeter, who is also the personification of wealth. But then, this may be because the name of both derives from the same word for “wealth” […]. It may mean that wealth is behind all this.
>
> —It usually is when men plan something base —
> said-. But I think it may be more significant that Cerberus has

> three heads. One body and three heads, that's important.
> —You saw the heads of Pompey and Crassus, enemies you have faced in the past. And the third one wasn't clear?
> —It was not clear, and it was the largest of the three. How can this be? Who could be greater than Pompey and Crassus?

Grimal16 already tells us that Pluto was one of the ritual nicknames of Hades, whose name could not be mentioned without resorting to a euphemism, as in the case of the benevolent Erinyes. Its proverbial wealth comes from its superposition to an agrarian divinity, since it is the earth that bears all the fruits. Indeed, there may be some ambiguity between Pluto and Pluto, who is also referred to in the text as the son of Demeter, and to whom Hesiod dedicates a few verses in *Theogony* 969-974, and of whom he states that Demeter had him from Iasicion

Cerberus as watchman of wealth—since Decius claims that wealth is behind everything that Pompey, Crassus and a mysterious third party supposedly plot—leads us to find a similar interpretation in Pérez de Moya, which would fit very well with what Maddox He tries to tell us, but he only hints or says it with figurative language so that a reader who knows a little about the history of Rome can understand it. Pérez de Moya says that

> Others say that Cerberus denoted avarice and greed for wealth […]. It has many heads because greed is the beginning and source of many evils and sins. Or because it attracts many miseries to men, since for the love of riches some are killed and oppressed by iron, others by poison and others by other means of snares. Or in another way, the three heads of Cerberus denote three needs that lead the good man to the contemplation of everlasting things, and to the bad they are poison; these are hunger, sleep.17

thirsty and

Cerberus here becomes a symbol of the disastrous moments that await the Republic, and through Maddox's figuration, Cerberus is the Republic itself in a state of fury and sudden collapse. The mysterious remains in the air

16 Grimal, *op. cit.,* p. 221 BC

17 Pérez de Moya, *op. cit.,* IV. twenty-one.

personality of the third head, the greatest as Decius points out, who is still not able to imagine that a man greater than Crassus and Pompey could exist. Asclepiodes suggests a few lines down that he could be Clodius, but Decius does not think he has sufficient status.

Maddox never says it, but very possibly he will return to the image of Cerberus in a later novel to explain to us that the third head cannot be other than that of Julius Caesar, and that the three-headed dog Cerberus is a representation of the first triumvirate,18 whose pact secret in 60 BC Maddox recreates in this novel that, without a doubt, is the most interesting of the series due to the attempt that this author makes to want to illuminate, through the licenses granted by literature, one of the darkest points of the Roman history.

3. The Minotaur

The hero Theseus has little relevance in the novels except in his confrontation with the Minotaur, a character that acquires symbolic connotations in Steven Saylor's work The Enigma of Catilina, where the Minotaur embodies the monstrous forces of Roman society of the time. The cycle of Theseus related to the end of Athenian subjection to Crete is summarized in SS Just 150, where the interior of the temple of Cumae is described - whose construction tradition attributes to Daedalus, and of which information is reported in SS Just 144 and 150—specifying that on the circular ceiling there are images of Apollo...

> contemplating various episodes from the life of Theseus: Pasiphae's passion for the bull and the birth of the Minotaur of Crete; the drawing of lots for the seven young Athenians who were sacrificed annually to the beast; the construction of the great labyrinth of Daedalus; Ariadne's pain; the death of the monster at the hands of Theseus; the aerial escape of Daedalus and his unfortunate son Icarus.

This evocation of Theseus' journey to kill the Minotaur has obvious Catulian reminiscences, because although the myth is described based on images of Apollo contemplating such events,

18 The one known as the first triumvirate consisted of the secret alliance between Crassus and the two most important politicians of the moment: Pompey and Julius Caesar.

foundations, the influence of poem 64 of his Carmina is still probable where, between lines 50 and 264, Catullus describes Ariadne's spurned passion for Theseus painted in various pictures on the quilt that covers the wedding bed of Thetis and Peleus. Although the description of the quilt could have served as inspiration for Saylor, the description of this quilt mentioned above responds, as Arturo Soler Ruiz demonstrates,19 to the structure of a triptych: Theseus's departure to the left, Ariadne's pain in the center, and to the right the appearance of Bacchus with his retinue. In Saylor's description we would have at least six images, one for each moment of intensity of the myth. Curiously, Saylor mentions Ariadne's pain between the construction of the labyrinth and the death of the monster at the hands of Theseus, which invalidates the fact that he refers to Ariadne's pain losing Theseus, but rather to her pain at the moment of fall in love with Theseus, which Catullus narrates (in LXIV 90-100) and Saylor seems to be recalling in his distribution of the various episodes of the myth on the ceiling of the temple of

For the rest, the various episodes listed, except for this pain of Cupid's crush which could well have been taken from Catullus, do not provide any reason for comment, since they are nothing more than the exposition of well-known facts transmitted by classical authors, but without a recreation of his own made by the novelist. If anything, we should note that Saylor accepts the version that the victims consecrated to the Minotaur were seven and a year, on which not all authors agree, since in Ovid *(Metamorphosis* VIII 171) we read, for example, that the The sending was every nine years and of seven maidens and seven young men, fourteen in total, while in Higino *(Fables* XLI) we are clearly told that the tribute was, as Saylor claims, seven young men each year. All the other elements of the story are collected in Apollodorus, Hyginus and Ovid.20

The Minotaur will become the representation of irrationality in the aforementioned Saylor novel, and to refresh the readers' memories and give them background, the novelist will review the myth, adapting it to the intelligent but still childish mentality, from his daughter Diana, in SS Cat 38:

19 Catullus, *Poems,* note on p. 138.

20 Apollodorus, *Library* III 1, 2-4; Higino, *Fables* XL-XLIII; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VIII 152-235.

—Dad, what is a minotaur?

—A minotaur? —I laughed at the abrupt way in which he had changed the subject —. As far as I know, there has only ever been one, the Minotaur. A terrible creature, son of a woman and a bull.

They say he had the head of a bull and the body of a man. He lived on a remote island called Crete, where an evil king kept him in a place called the Labyrinth.

—A labyrinth?

"Yes, with walls that high." I erased the tablet and began to draw a labyrinth. Every year the king gave boys and girls to the Minotaur as an offering to eat. The children came in this way and the Minotaur was waiting here. This lasted a long time, until a hero named Theseus entered the Labyrinth and killed the Minotaur.

Everything seems to arise from a little joke between siblings, since Diana explains a few lines below that her brother Meto wanted to threaten her with that story, because if she doesn't behave well, she will be handed over to the Minotaur so that he can devour her. Meto thus introduces the theme of the Minotaur in the novel, the same Meto who will run away from home fascinated by Catilina21 to join her war. The Minotaur, a monster with a human body but an animal brain - although rational in Saylor - will represent throughout the work the primary forces of nature that, in a society in crisis dominated by ambition and power struggles, definitively escape the control of the reason for taking innocent lives, as innocent as those of those children devoured by the beast in the myth that Gordianus recreates for Diana, in Saylor's idea that men, whatever their age, are nothing more than children who cannot rebel against powers and interests dictated by the upper echelons and under which they end up succumbing and losing their lives.

The theme will run through the work through recurring mentions of very minor importance, as in SS Cat 139, where

21 Lucius Sergius Catilina was the last representative of the Sergia gens, one of the oldest in the Republic. After a third failure as a candidate for the consulship in 62 BC, he went on to lead a handful of discontents or victims of the economic policy of recent times who thought, after the assassination of Cicero, of taking the reins of the State. Once his plan was discovered and exposed in the Senate by Cicero, Catiline was forced to flee and many of his accomplices were arrested. In 62 BC, his troops faced the consular armies in Pistoia, but were defeated and Catiline was found among the corpses.

Meto again makes the comparison between the entrance into a cave with the entrance into the Minotaur's labyrinth, until the monstrous character becomes allegorical when Gordianus remembers how he is involved in the last and fatal battle of
Catilina, in SS Cat 426:

> And so, at the age of forty-seven, I was a soldier for the first time in my life, outfitted with scraps of discarded armor, a coat of mail with half the weave missing, and a dented, helmet-shaped helmet. crushed pumpkin, brandishing a dull sword in the name of a hopeless cause, under the orders of a leader destined to fail. I must have been approaching the center of the Labyrinth; I almost felt the warm breath of the Minotaur on my face.

Thanks to the magical virtues of popular literature, in which we believe that this type of novels is part, only Meto and Gordianus will remain alive after the well-known skirmish narrated by Sallust in his work *The Conjuration of Catilina,* but before waking up Gordianus dreams of the Minotaur between pages 429 and 430, a Minotaur who, even though he thinks and can speak, once again embodies the values of fierceness and cruelty. Gordianus believes he wakes up, within his dream, in the *Labyrinth of the Minotaur,* where he finds the beast in front of him:

> He was very close, so close that I could see the flash of his black eyes. I should have been scared to death, but I wasn't. The only thing I could think of was that his eyes were beautiful. It was a living creature and, in the midst of so much hard and inert stone [with which the labyrinth is built] any living being seemed precious and rare to me, something worth appreciating, never fearing. Even so, when the beast left the bend and approached, I became a little nervous: it walked on two legs, had the head of a bull and the body of a man. I also noticed that its long, curved horns ended in a very sharp point and had a rust-colored stain.

Saylor's description follows to the letter what ancient mythographers tell us, except for a couple of details that enrich the portrait: the beauty that he believes he sees in her eyes and the description of her long horns. and curved, a description that corresponds precisely to some sculptures of heads of

bull found in Crete, with whose tauric cults and dimensions of their palaces correspond, in a mixture of forgotten history and fantasy sufficiently proven to date, the Cretan myths related to the Minotaur.

A little further down there is a dialogue between man and beast:

> The Minotaur snorted, steam emitting from its nostrils. He stopped a few steps away and raised his head. When he spoke, it was with a simulated voice, as it sounded hoarse and unnatural.
> -Who are you? -asked.
> —My name is Gordianus.
> -You're not from here.
> —I came to look for something.
> -That's stupid. This is a labyrinth and the purpose of a labyrinth is to confuse.
>
> —But I managed to find you.
> "Haven't I found you?"

The text is brief, but it is full of symbolic representations related to Saylor's allegorical vision of the labyrinth and the Minotaur: the labyrinth is the politics lacking sanity that leads to war, fire and death that Pasiphae's son represents. . That is why the Minotaur recognizes Gordian as someone who does not belong to that world, and why the Minotaur makes him see that it was he who found the Hound, but not the other way around: the circumstances of the novel that Saylor creates in around Catiline's conspiracy little by little drive the character to his involvement in a lost war. The dialogue is interrupted here, and then a change of scene takes place that takes Gordianus to his villa in Umbria, where they are accompanied by “three naked bodies, without heads, sitting with their hands on their thighs on three stumps, like spectators of a game or judges of a court.”

Now, the three decapitated people found on their farm become judges of the world of dreams, a transcript of the world of the dead.
Gordianus knows that the truth will now be revealed, even though the Minotaur refuses to tell him. Following the thread of Cretan relations, the three beheaded judges who will let him know the truth become a transcript of the just infernal judges Minos, Rhadamantis and Aeacus. From this revealing vision, Gordianus cuts off the head of the Minotaur, which is nothing more than a mask,

and from within it will emerge, in SS Cat 430, the true face of the cause of its evils.

Except for this important allegory in which Saylor converts the Minotaur - as we already saw that Maddox did with Cerberus - the allusions to Asterion, the true name of the beast and never remembered in the novels in a personalized way, meet only in the mere quotation or analogy with something foreign to his own nature, as Maddox does in JMR Tem 33: “I met a few Pythagoreans in Rome who had achieved the almost inconceivable feat of mixing mathematics and religion. I wondered what monstrous cult, in the image of a minotaur, could emerge from a fusion of Archimedes and Baal Ahriman.”

CHAPTER 5

The Appian Way, home of the dead

The old saying goes that all roads lead to Rome. This proverb, as well known today as it is decontextualized, stated with its brevity the magnificent work of construction of roads that the ancient Romans consolidated and that allowed all places in the Empire to be interconnected until reaching the City. The Appian Way, which led directly to Rome, was for centuries one of its most emblematic routes. It was also, curiously, the last resting place of the ancient Romans, since, although all roads led to Rome, many of the paths of life led to the Appian Way after death. We want to remember here what were the most striking aspects of the Appian Way as a cemetery, and to do so we will do so by focusing on two of the novels by Steven Saylor,1 author of detective novels who recreate with literary touches the double nature of this important route.

And in ancient Rome, although there had been a necropolis, the bodies generally ended up resting in the pantheons that bordered the Appian Way for much of its length. The rich raised their buildings with which men of modest means, and even poor ones, could not rival, in the least, which ended up in mass graves or columbariums.

On pages 62-63 of *The House of the Vestals,* a collection of stories by Steven Saylor, this author tells us, through an inconsequential allusion to the embalmers of the Esquiline Gate, that the necropolis is located beyond it,

1 On this occasion, we will focus on two of Steven Saylor's most notable works: *A Murder on the Appian Way* (1996) and *Rubicon* (1999), with a brief mention of the volume of short stories *The House of the Vestals.*

but it will be on page 71 of the same work where he will present us with a vivid description:

> Through the Esquiline Gate you pass from the city of the living to the city of the dead.
>
> To the left of the road is the public necropolis of Rome, where the tombs of slaves and the modest graves of poor Romans are piled almost together. Long ago, when Rome was young, lime pits were discovered nearby. Just as the city of the living clustered around the river, the forum and the markets, the city of the dead spread around the lime pits, the crematoriums and the temples in which corpses are purified.
>
> To the right of the road are the cesspools into which the inhabitants of Subura and surrounding neighborhoods throw their garbage.
>
> All kinds of waste pile up in the sand pits... broken dishes and furniture, rotten remains of food, discarded, dirty and torn clothes that not even a beggar would want to wear. Here and there, the guardians lit small bonfires to burn the debris, then raked sand over the embers.

The desolate atmosphere of the necropolis is quite realistic. Slaves and poor Romans were buried there. It must be remembered here that there were two types of burial places: public and private, but both outside the walls of Rome, since except for the vestals and the emperors, no one could be buried within the walls under penalty of some punishment. Public places were at this time of two kinds: for illustrious men, who were buried in the Campus Martius, and for poor citizens, buried beyond the Esquiline Gate, as Saylor says, that is, in the Esquiline Campus. where was the necropolis that this author describes as a chaotic and atrocious place where the bodies were deposited in wells or small caverns called puticuli, as Varro defined them in *De lingua latina.*[2] As is logical to think,

2 Varro, *De lingua latina* V 4. 25: “They were called *puticuli* because of the wells *[putei]* that were outside the city, because there men were immersed in wells; and also, as Aelius writes, *puticulae,* since in them the thrown corpses were corrupted *[putesce-bant] ”* (Extra oppida a puteis puticuli, quod ibi in puteis obruebantur homines, nisi potius, ut Aelius scribit, puticulae, quod putescebant ibi cadavera proiecta, qui locus publicus ultra Exquilias).

This place in the Campo Esquilino became an infected place that was later bought by the famous philanthropist Maecenas and converted into splendid gardens among which he built a magnificent mansion.3

But the most important succession of private tombs, the construction of which was not within the reach of any citizen, was the Appian Way. Steven Saylor provides us with a description of it and its quiet inhabitants in the novel dedicated to the murder of Publius Clodius and titled, precisely, *Murder on the Appian Way.* Between pages 172-173 of the novel, the author gives a brief history lesson with some curious details. It basically focuses on three aspects, the first of which is the description, in this case succinct, of the Appian Way:

> Lined along the road, as always on the main public roads on the outskirts of the city, there were large and small tombs and tombs. […] Twisted cenotaphs with inscriptions worn by the passage of time stood next to family portraits newly sculpted in marble and limestone.
> Among the most distinguished tombs were those of the Scipios, the family whose glory had dominated Rome in the time before my father was born. They conquered Carthage and began to consolidate the Empire; now they were dust.

Naturally, not all the tombs on the Appian Way were equally splendid, but there were all kinds of them, and along these lines is the description that Saylor also gives us of the Appian Way on page 134 of his novel Rubicon . Friedlaender tells us that there were from family ones, one hundred feet square, to individual ones, just over ten feet on each side,4 and let's not forget the lavish freedman Trimalchio, who in *Satyricon* LXXII states that

3 The novelist John Maddox Roberts evokes this ancient necropolis in his novel *The Mystery of the Amulet* (p. 40): “The man informed me that the person in charge of the funeral home would come for the body after sunset the next day. If no one claimed him within the three regulatory days, he would be buried at the expense of the State in the community cemetery, along with the corpses of slaves and other foreigners without employers. Those large pits that perfumed the city in summer opened on the grounds now covered by the beautiful gardens of Maecenas. It represents a notable improvement for the city that I have always vehemently applauded.”

4 Ludwig Friedlaender (1947), *Roman society.* Mexico: FCE, pp. 858-859.

In his tomb there will be vineyards, fruit trees and a guardhouse; It will cover twenty thousand square feet and will allocate one hundred thousand sesterces to purchase the land. In this regard, the description that Saylor gives us in *Rubicon* (p. 135) of the tomb of Pompey's father is that of a wealthy work:

> We passed the Pompeii family pantheon. The tomb of Pompey's father was strident and ornate. All the gods of Olympus were crowded on the pediment, as if competing for such an honor, painted in natural colors and surrounded by a golden border that cast faint red sparkles in the rays of the rising sun. The tomb seemed recently painted and restored, although neglected of late; Weeds had grown everywhere since Pompey and his family had fled south.

Friedlaender mentions that the oldest ones, with time-worn inscriptions, alternate next to newly sculpted family portraits, since the tradition of placing tombs next to roads was ancient, and was maintained for many years until the end. Empire. Unfortunately, as Friedlaender points out in his aforementioned work, of these fantastic monuments today there is no trace left, the vast majority of which are nothing more than ruins. The authors do not highlight the aspect of the funerary inscriptions either, and in these pages Saylor only limits himself to saying that they were so old that they had been erased by time, although in *Rubicón* (p. 136) he transcribed that of Numerio Pompey, which did not It fits too closely with the testimonies collected by us, perhaps because it is more original:

Numerio Pompey:
Gift from the gods,
Those who jealously claimed it,
After twenty three years
Among the living.

Generally, funerary inscriptions or epitaphs began with the letters DMS *(Dis Manibus Sacrum),* or simply DM followed by the name of the deceased and his age, and then the name of the person who had erected the monument or paid the payment.

urn.5 Saylor speaks of large and small tombs and tombs, and we must also distinguish between monumentum, or tomb erected in memory of the dead that housed the urn with the ashes inside, and conditoria, underground tombs where the body rested. whole, and not an urn with his ashes.6

Secondly, since the Appian Way owed its name to the surname of its founder, Appius Claudius, Saylor cannot fail to mention the tombs of the Claudia family, as in this passage that we reproduce from A *Murder on the Appian Way* (p . 172): “The tombs of the Claudios were equally magnificent. The Appian Way was their road, or so they considered it, since it had been built by their ancestors. The deceased Claudios huddled in a dense group along the road in their carved stone tombs, like spectators jostling to watch a parade.”

The Claudia family, whose last exponent was Clodio Pulcher, already vulgarizing the family name, was one of the most distinguished and aristocratic in the city of Rome until the final times of the Republic. The builder of the Appian Way was specifically Appius Claudius Caeco, from whose *praenomen* the important road took its name.7 Of all the magistracies he held, it was that of the censorship in 312 BC that granted him the greatest glory when building the Appian Way , which linked Rome with Capua, and the Aqua Claudia, works that were a reflection of its two predominant centers of interest: the well-being of the urban population of Rome, in the interior; abroad, contact with the business world of Campania.8

Lastly, the most interesting description related to this route will come from the legendary monument to Basil, a

5 William Smith (1875), *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities.* London: Funus.

6 *Idem.*

7 *Liviani operis periochae* IX, p. 15: “The censor Appius Claudius transported the water and built the road called Appia” (Appius Claudius censor aquam perduxit, viam stravit, quae Appia vocata est).

8 cf. “Claudio Ciego”, in Jorge Martínez-Pinna, Santiago Montero Herrero and Joaquín Gómez Pantoja (1998), *Dictionary of Greek and Roman historical figures.* Madrid: Isthmus; In this same work, p. 416, we can find the genealogical table of the Claudius from the first Publius Claudius Pulcher, consul in 249 BC. The busts of almost all of them are those whom Saylor describes as “spectators jostling to see a parade.”

a place that was a nest of robbers and that becomes relevant in the novel *A Murder on the Appian Way.* The quote is from page 173, and shows that the resting place of the dead was not always the resting place of the living:

> At the far end of the city, where the graves and rubbish mounds became smaller and farther apart and the countryside was beginning to be countryside, we passed Basil's monument. I never found out who this Basilius was or why his tomb, built like a miniature Greek temple on the top of a small hill, had to be larger than those of the Claudius or the Scipios. The inscriptions are so old that they were already illegible. But the prominence and location of the monument make it a kind of landmark. Basil's monument marks the most distant stretch of the city's vices or the furthest incursion of the countryside's menace, depending on your point of view.
>
> Vicious types of all stripes congregate there. The area is notorious for robberies and rapes. Hence the warning that is usually given to a friend when he goes on a trip along the Appian Way is: "Be careful when you pass by the monument of Basil!"

Although we have not been able to find more information about this Basilio, we have discovered that this dangerous enclave of the Appian Way really existed, and as in Saylor's novel, it is also true that many were subject to assault and violence. For example, we have the testimony of Cicero in *Ad Atticum* VII 9. 1: "I see that you have not returned a few, those that my relative Lucius Quintus was carrying, when, upon arriving near the tomb of Basil, he was attacked and wounded" (Unas video mihi a te non esse redditas, quas L. Quinctius, familiaris meus, cum ferret ad bustum Basili vulneratus et despoliatus est); and Quintus Asconius Pedianus, in *Orationum Ciceronis enarratio, Milonianam,* p. 44, we find a succinct explanation about this famous monument: "The monument of Basil is located on the Appian Way, near th This place was sadly famous for its armed robberies, a fact that is also recorded in many other writings" *(Via Appia est prope urbem monumentum Basili, qui locus latrociniis Fuit perinfamis, quod ex aliis quoque multis intellegi potest).*

The famous columbariums or sepulcra familiaria remain to be mentioned in this final point of our comment, since they were built by individuals for them and their families or

heirs. They took their name from the arrangement of niches one above the other, in the manner of pigeon nests, and where the funeral urns of the deceased of a family were deposited.
One of the most perfect can still be seen at the Villa Rufini, two miles beyond the Porta Pia.9

The Appian Way, an emblem of Roman times for centuries, was not only the road that led to Rome and thus marked the end of the journey, but also an important starting point from the city. The journey, a peculiar transcript of life, of which one always knows when it begins, but not when it ends, also had its presence within the physical destiny of the ancient Romans. The Appian Way also became the end of the existential journey, and from this point of view, also the beginning: from their tomb on the Appian Way, the ancient Romans also began the journey towards the afterlife, a postmortuary existence that Christianity It would become a sky reminiscent of the lost paradise, but also of the garden of the blessed in Greco-Roman Hades.

9 Smith, *ibid.* The author reproduces in the corresponding section a drawing of these columbaria from the Villa Rufina, in Rome.

CHAPTER 6

Physiology of ancient taste

irreparably, to an appreciation of its values and principles, since the vital experience of gustatory pleasures provides us with a special light.

A walk through the culinary art of a country leads us, Nutritionists would define it, perhaps, paraphrasing the famous company axiom: tell me how you eat and I'll tell you who you are. In the case of ancient civilizations, we have the same clues to understand them better to the extent that these clues are as abundant as possible, and in the case of the Roman civilization we have abundant and valid testimonies. Since every historical novel seeks to immerse the reader in a reality, generally very different from their own, novelists will always try to find the necessary equivalences so that the reader not only understands, but also feels as best as possible—and even tastes—the story. era or civilization in which he ventures hand in hand with the To do this, the novelists resort to the culinary culture of the Roman world from a timeless point of view, basing themselves, as we will do to comment on their work, on data dated to the times of the Republic, but also resorting to authors such as Marcial, Juvenal, Petronio or Apicius.

It is true that, in general, the exaggerated image that the average educated citizen has of the gluttony of the Roman people and what their behavior was like around the mensa is influenced by Christian literature, which is highly moralizing, and by a certain number of classical authors. . Indeed, authors such as Varro, Seneca or Pliny the Elder1 made a fuss about the dissipated culinary customs of their time, in what was nothing more than the repetition of the old commonplace of systematic worseni

1 Cf. Sen. Ep. ad Luc. XV 95. 15-17, where the philosopher exposes the horrifying physical consequences into which the gluttony of his time degenerates.

of customs in the face of the mythologized austerity of the old and hard times. In short, “Capuchin sermons”, as Goethe lapidaryly defined them.2 On the other hand, it is undeniable that we have the example of frankly dissipated emperors, such as Nero or Elagabalus, who, becoming models of crazed Caesarism, squandered great fortunes on derro -ches of all kinds, culinary too, in stark contrast to the restraint of other more restrained emperors, such as Tiberius or Vespasian. However, the frugality of the latter is not as exciting from a fictional point of view as the waste of the former, and the first Christians tried to mix them all in a totum revolutum of difficult cultural digestion that, from the point of view of propaganda, was successful among future generations. However, as Friedlaender reasonably demonstrated, it is an exaggeration to lump all Romans together.

When moralists like Seneca or Pliny reflect contemptuously on the new culinary customs, they do so looking with nostalgia at the remote times of the monarchy: at that time there were three meals a day, the ientaculum or breakfast, the dinner or lunch, and the evening or dinner itself. These are times of austerity and in the food you can sense the rude ways of that primitive town of warrior peasants.

Vegetables prepared without refinement and puls, a simple porridge dish, predominate. The meal is celebrated in the atrium, since the *triclinium does not yet exist,* either as a bed or as a room in the house. Little wine is drunk, and its consumption is prohibited for women and young people. This is not the time in which the novels we are studying take place, but it is the time in which authors like Plinio or Varrón locate their nostalgia, a nostalgia that, in honor of the truth, is also shared by some characters in these works, but not others. . Thus, we have the case of Decius Caecilius Metellus the Younger, who has no love for the meager ientacula of yesteryear, even though they are well regarded by the puritanical society of his time. Thus, in JMR Mist 17 Decius tells us that his father adheres to traditions, but they do not enjoy his sympathy:

2 Ludwig Friedlaender (1947), Roman society. Mexico: FCE, p. 775.

> Still standing, my father ate his breakfast from a tray held by a slave. It consisted of a couple of crusts of bread sprinkled with salt and helped with a glass of water to help swallow them. This was undoubtedly a virtuous Roman custom, but it lacked the nutritional value required by a man who spent all day in the Senate. I used to have a much larger breakfast in bed. My father censured me for considering it a barbaric practice, valid only for Greeks and Orientals, so perhaps, without knowing it, I have played a role in the fall of the Republic. Be that as it may, I continue having breakfast in bed.

Decius will once again record this paternal repudiation in JMR Sac 107-108, where he no longer uses the adjective "barbarian" to designate foreigners, but rather his father calls him a true degenerate for ingesting the *ientaculum3* in bed. The glass of water, simply and among the hygienists who believed they could lose weight in this way, would become the imperial period in the entire *entaculum.* For the rest, Decius is not very baroque in his *ientacula either,* and his diet is quite reminiscent of our most common breakfasts: boiled eggs, fruit and bread soaked in sweet wine, in JMR Sac 107; bread, cheese and sliced fruit in JMR Sat 206. Even in the novel *The Temple of the Muses,* which takes place in exotic Alexandria, their morning diet is quite reminiscent of the popular North American breakfasts based on cereals and granolas, as evident in JMR Item 61: Egyptian flat bread, dates and figs with milk and honey. Of course, there is a contrast when on the next page Decius finds Ptolemy doing the same thing in front of a roast peacock, Nile fish, oysters and even roast gazelle, in JMR Tem 62.

Maddox puts two themes in Decius' mouth that are worth emphasizing: the idea that the relaxation of customs and luxury led to the fall of the Republic, and the accusation that these bad influences came from the harmful influence of Greeks. and oriental.

Of the first we have numerous ancient testimonies, and thus we find in Juvenal a bitter contrast between the old Roman poverty and the customs of his time:

3 Hacquard, *op. cit.,* p. 190.

> Now we suffer the evils of a long peace. A luxury more cruel than weapons has spread and punishes a defeated world. There is no crime or crime of lust that has been missing since the moment Roman poverty died […] Obscene money brought us foreign customs, and soft riches broke the ancient customs with their horrible luxury.4

Despite the possibly exaggerated nature of Juvenal's acrimonious comments, some historians see luxury not so much as the cause of decadence as as its symptom, as Friedlaender establishes in his work: he claims that luxury was a consequence of economic shocks. and social changes that occurred in Rome since the end of the Punic Wars, on the one hand due to the accumulation of large capital in relation to the decline of the middle class and the increase of the proletariat; on the other, with the destruction of Roman sobriety as needs, means of enjoyment and the increase in the desire to enjoy multiply.5

As for the accusations against Greeks and Orientals, there are ironic comments during the course of many of the novels, but we only find them in Maddox, and they also reflect this ancient disdain towards the Hellenes who were contemporaries of the Romans. Juvenal himself has virulent attacks against them, not so much as a contempt for their culture, but as a contempt for their decadence with respect to the great culture they gave to the world: “I cannot bear, O Quirites, a Greek City! Although, what portion of this dregs is truly Achaean?”,6 and a little later he will mock with great sarcasm at his faculties, and even at his pretensions of superiority: “Grammar, orator, geometer, painter, masseuse, augur, tightrope walker, doctor, magician: every discipline a hungry little Greek knows. Command him to go up to heaven and he w

4 Juv. VI 292-300: Nunc patimur longae pacis mala, saeuior armis / luxuria incu-buit uictumque ulciscitur orbem. / Nullum crime abest facinusque libidinis ex quo / paupertas Romana perit. Hinc fluxit ad istos / et Sybaris colles, hinc et Rhodos et Miletos / atque coronatum et petulans madidumque Tarentum. / Prima peregrinos obscena pecunia mores / intulit, et turpi fregerunt saecula luxu / diuitiae molles.

5 Friedlaender, *op. cit.,* p. 761.

6 Juv. III 60-61: Nec modesty obstabit non possum ferre, Quirites, / Graecam urbem. Quamvis quota portio faecis Achaei?

7 Juv. III 76-79: Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes, / augur,

Of course, he will demonstrate the same attitude towards the Egyptians, a people whom he detests and calls crazy *[demens]* and whom he despises for worshiping crocodiles, cats and even dogs, but no one Diana, and whom in the end accused of cannibalism.8

During the Republic and until the second century, things do not seem to change much in Rome and the obsession with eating properly reaches the persecutory delirium of the luxury of the table being governed by the censors.9 From the second century onwards they began to introduce -Some innovations have been introduced and meals become more subtle due to imports, but there are still three meals a day. The *ientaculum* is made up of a little bread and cheese, the *prandium* or light midday meal consists of cold meats, fruits and a little wine and, as in the case of Decius's father, is eaten standing up so as not to prolong a meal too long. pleasure that, more fully, will come with dinner after mid-afternoon and that lasts until nightfall. Dinner is, as Maddox recalls in JMR Sac 54, the important meal: “The idea of lunch *[ie prandium]* was quite new to the Romans.

We became accustomed to starving ourselves all day. Dinner was not only the most important social event, but also the only true meal of the entire day.

The dinner recreated in the novels is a gustatory festival that, as could be expected, was exclusive to the wealthy class.
We are aware that this small daily celebration that was dinner was not affordable for everyone: not all Romans lived in houses that allowed the creation of a space for the triclinium, nor could everyone afford to support several or just one.

schoenobates, medicus, magus, omnia nouit / Graeculus esuriens: in caelum iusseris ibit.

8 Cf. Juv. XV 1-13. Basically it is a paraphrase of Cicero, Tusc. V 78.

9 Hacquard, *op. cit.*, p. 109. In Jean-Noel Robert (1992), *The Pleasures in Rome.* Madrid: Edaf [Chronicles of History, 5], p. 136, we find a summary of the history of condemnatory edicts: the first law dates from Cato's censorship; The second, twenty-two years later, regulated the expenses of the feasts and prohibited the drinking of foreign wine and the serving of anything other than an unfattened chicken; it limited the number of guests from three to five and only three times a month; Twenty years later, another law threatened guests with the same penalties as their hosts. Later, Caesar and Augustus imitated this repressive policy. On all occasions the laws and edicts were absolutely useless.

slave. Many of them even had to settle for a plate of *puls* eaten in front of a vulgar table, since we know that the dinner ritual, the *lecti* tricliniares and the triclinium itself were exclusive to the wealthy class, since the people never used it. was able to practice. The recreation of day-to-day life on the island where the hero of Lindsey Davis's novels, Marco Didio Falco, lives, testifies to his daily life.

Steven Saylor puts in Gordianus's mouth, in SS Sang 135, something that is not lacking, precisely, to the truth: "People feed on bread", which turns out to be a categorical truth: the lavish dinners of Trimalchio in Petronio's work They have nothing to do with the diet of the middle Romans, most of whom ate basically flour, either in the form of bread or in the form of porridge *(puls).* When Maddox wants to tell us that his character Decius eats modestly, he uses porridge to express it: “Cassandra served me a plate of fish and wheat porridge, which was a protective insurance against the cold of winter, along with hot and very watered wine. . After the luxurious delicacies on Sergio's table, I craved a truly modest meal.” Modest for Decius Caecilius Metellus the Younger, since many times not even fish could be part of the menu. The low social background of Saylor's character, Gordiano the Hound, makes him more representative of this way of eating, and thus we will see how in SSAp 44 the family has hot porridge for breakfast, and on page 233 oatmeal porridge will be mentioned as part of of your diet. Marcial also mentions a black pudding covering snow-white porridge *(et pultem niueam premens botellus)*

[10] as a member of what he calls a sad meal, but only in contrast to a great banquet full of cravings and excesses.

In general, and in these novels, we must distinguish between the food and the banquet. The characters frequently eat on the street, such as Decio in JMR Con 192, who devours an appetizing sandwich consisting of thin slices of lamb with fried onions and olives, served in a loaf; or Gordiano, at SS Vest 13, who buys some calf brain sausages with almonds from a stall. Dinner, which as we have seen was the dish

10 Mar. V 78. 9.

important of the day, it is not always a banquet, and so we have Gordiano dining on a simple fish and barley soup at SS Just 13. In SS Ap 143 we have a dinner in the company of Cicero that, although it seems appetizing, is far from any idea of culinary luxury: “The food was superb. A fish soup with boiled pasta followed by pieces of roast chicken wrapped in grape leaves marinated with an aromatic cumin sauce.
Cicero had learned to appreciate the most exquisite pleasures that corresponded to a man of his condition.” But what draws the most attention is the banquet, and this is represented following the characteristics of the famous episode of Trimalchio in *Satyricon,* the novelists seeking two things: surprise, through an elaborate recreation of the typical rituals of the same, and also through the mention of dishes that, for our taste, may seem extravagant. But the banquet is also a party, and at the party disguise is allowed, and in this case one of the most peculiar characteristics of the Roman banquet is always respected, the disguise of the delicacies, as Ling recalls: “One of the arts of the chef Roman was to disguise the dishes so that no one could guess what the ingredients were.”11 Let us examine, for example, the menu of the banquet that Lucullus holds to commemorate his victory over Tigranes in JMR Con 33:

> Lucullus's taste for luxury was well known, and this was the first of the banquets that would bring him even more fame than his victories. Those offered were not only famous for the excellence of the food, but also for the theatrical effects. The first fountain placed before me, for example, was composed of hard-boiled eggs from various species of birds, arranged in ascending order to create a replica of the great lighthouse of Alexandria. A bowl of scented oil burned high above.

In fact, the author tells us about the banquet of L. Licinius Lucullus, a banquet after which this soldier would retire from political life. Lucullus would remain a model of a cultured man (his library was famous) and a passionate gourmet. As we are at the beginning of the banquet, we begin with the platter of bird eggs.

11 Ling, op. cit., p. 845.

diverse, as corresponded to the tradition that would gloss the expression *ab ovo usque ad mala,* [12] which Marcial paraphrased in an epigram to indicate the hunger at the beginning of the banquet and the difficulty in stopping eating at the end: “I send you small gifts from my suburban garden: eggs for your hunger, and fruits, Severus, for your gluttony.”13

It will not be, by any means, the last mention of boiled eggs, so common in Roman cuisine as starters, and we will again find boiled quail eggs at JMR Con 227, and even wrapped in gold leaf at JMR Sac 56, again at Lúpulo's house, followed by a first course consisting of roasted piglets with rubies instead of eyes.

Except in these banquets, and related almost exclusively to Lucullus but also to Lysas, the Egyptian ambassador in Rome, we will not find extravagances similar to these gold-covered eggs to eat, although there is evidence that powdered pearls dissolved in wine or were drunk. other drinks, and sometimes they were even swallowed whole, the only example - according to Friedlaender - of Roman culinary luxury next to the fact of eating nightingales.14 Lucullus' triumphant banquet continues with the presentation of other delicacies where simulation plays an important place:

> The next dishes offered nautical themes. A triremo sailed propelled by roast suckling pigs that slaves dressed as sailors brought to the table. A roast chicken was served, the feathers of which had been reattached to give the impression that it was alive, and to which the bodies and tails of mullets had been attached to form a mythical maritime creature.
>
> So that we would not die of hunger among these imaginative dishes, the tables were overflowing with more vulgar foods: breads, cheeses, nuts, olives, small roast sausages...

12 *Ab ovo usque ad mala:* “From eggs to apples”, to refer to the beginning and end of the banquet from the appetizer to the desserts. It has also become a proverbial expression to designate beginning and end in a general way.

13 Mart. VII 49: Parua suburbani munuscula mittimus horti: / faucibus oua tuis, poma, Seuere, gulae.

14 Friedlaender, *op. cit.,* p. 772.

And later, on page 35, another mythical ship will make an appearance: “I threw myself on a roast goat that moments before had been part of the crew of the Argos. The ship moved along the table as the slaves reduced their crew before each diner.” On page 36, an exotic dish that is very rare for our taste will also be mentioned: lark tongue in caper sauce, as well as peacock tongues marinated in JMR Mist 34.

Two characters are mentioned in the novels as singular gastronomes: Sergio Paulo, in *The Mystery of the Amulet,* and the Egyptian ambassador in Rome, Lisas. In JMR Mist 35, Decio is invited to a unique lunch by the nobleman Sergio Paulo:

> Sergius's “light refreshment” was in reality a banquet that the senate would have been proud of at the reception of a new ambassador. It consisted of marinated peacock tongues and javelin udders stuffed with Lebanese mice, deep fried; in addition to lamp-preas, oysters, truffles and other exotic rarities, delicacies in great abundance. Whoever had been in charge of the decoration of the house had not shown restraint at the table, which was ostentatious, vulgar and absolutely delicious.

Many of the members of this tasty lunch are taken from the *Satyricon,* or are inspired by it, where we are also mentioned something very similar to javelin udders, in this case sow udders,15 frequently mentioned by Marcial, being the The best reference to this dish is the one that appears in book mentioned, although Friedlaender asserts that this tuber was little appreciated in Antiquity and that it was only known for the white truffle *(misy,* mentioned by Pliny), but not the black one. Whatever it may be, at Apicio we find tips for preserving truffles

15 *Satyricon* XXXVI.

16 Mart. XIII 44: Esse putes nondum sumen; sic ubere long / et fluit et vivo lacte tumet porridge; cf. also VII 78 and XII 48.

17 *Satyricon* XXXV.

(tuber),18 as well as various recipes.19 And not only in Apicius, but also Juvenal and Martial speak of it with devotion, but without establishing a distinction between the white and the black.20 Nor the mention of oysters nor of the peacocks - in this case, the dish consists of their tongues - should surprise us, since oyster farms and peacock breeding existed as an industry to satisfy the enormous demand. Specifically, the important oyster farm in Lake Lucrino is remembered in SS Just 47: “No one will die of hunger as long as there is fish in the Crater or oysters in Lake Lucrino.” This nursery, which was artificial, had been created by Sergio Orata—probably the same Orata who appears in *The Arm of Justice*— after numerous previous attempts, all of which were unsuccessful. Pliny asserted that not only gluttony itself, but also the desire for profit, were the cause of the birth of these artificial nurseries.21 Martial remembers these oysters in one of his epigrams: “I have arrived, oyster drunk with water from the Lucrine of Berries: now, vicious, I thirst for noble garo.”22

As the Egyptians are branded—following the anti-Oriental tradition—as exotic and eccentric in these novels, to highlight the sense of gravitas of the Roman people, Lisas, the Egyptian ambassador in Rome, is also mentioned as an individual who at any time had a good table well served.
It will be precisely in JMR Tem where we are told about some of the Egyptian foods, although undoubtedly incurring nonsense: giant elephant intestine sausage stuffed with sweet waterfowl meat and lobster, on page 94; roasted whole hippopotamus, on page 16; and on the same page, elephant ear soup, which will lead Decius to crack a joke: “I dipped an ivory spoon into the mixture and tasted it. I would never replace chicken soup in my appreciation.”

18 App. 27.

19 Apic. 316-321.

20 Mar. XIII 50; Juv. V 115-125 and XIV 7-10. The editor Francisco Socas gives us the information, on page 139, that truffles were highly appreciated by the rich.

21 Friedlander, *op. cit.,* p. 800.

22 Mart. XIII 82: EBRIA BAIANO VENI MODE CONCHA LUCRINO: / NOBILE NUND SITE Luxuriosa Garum. Cf. also, III 60 and XII 48. In Juvenal we find mention in IV 137; In VIII 85 the Gauro oysters are also celebrated.

As for Lisas, her oriental and *mollis* personality is reflected in JMR Sac 96:

> I accompanied him to a triclinium prepared as for a small banquet. It was not the usual dinner time, but Lisas kept a buffet in this room at all hours for unexpected visitors. I filled a tray with smoked fish and pickled tongue, plus other viands that didn't have to be served hot.

In this case we do not have a dazzling or overly original menu, since both the smoking of food products *(fumo aliquid durare)* and pickling (escabeche, muria or *salsamentum)* were common in Roman cuisine, and the pickle is collected by Apicius several times. times.23

The description abounds in the foods that obsessed the Romans as much as us, since chicken and pork have continued to be recurring meats in our food, but beef is not mentioned in any of the works. In the case of the Romans, they were very fond of roasted birds, among which were the pheasant, the peacock and the Numidian hen, an example of which is the description of Faustino's villa in the always celebrated Bayas. , where numerous names of breeding birds are given.24 Sausages, also remembered, were very popular in Roman cuisine. In the novels they are also mentioned in JMR Sat 115 and in JMR Con 192, wrapped in this case in mulberry leaves, a leaf wrapping that was common in the kitchen of this town. Sausages are frequently collected by Apicius in his work, under the names of esicium and botellus, and of which he mentions many ways of preparation. The pork is consumed as roast suckling pig, and in JMR Con 227 some ground pork cakes are mentioned. Apicio also includes various recipes for hare and partridge, although of these only a dish of wild hare cooked with fat beans (fabae) is mentioned in SS Con 47, which provokes the profound rejection of the Pythagorean Vatinius: “Beans are a food impure. Eating them is contrary to the teachings of Pythagoras.” This same idea, referring to beans,

23 Apic. Muria: 18, 257, 288.

24 Mart. III 58.

It is also collected by Saylor in SS Just 89, and in the Author's Note he claims to have taken it from Cicero's *De Divinatione.25*

> "Better urine than beans," Dionisio exclaimed. You already know Plato's advice: at night you must enter the realm of dreams with a pure spirit.
> —And what does that have to do with beans? —Fabio asked.
> —Don't you know what the Pythagoreans said? The flatulence caused by beans prevents the soul from seeking the truth.

Two moments are especially relevant in terms of food: the Saturnalia dinner and the death feasts.
Although the Saturnalia dinner does not seem to be characterized by anything in particular—except the curious reversal of roles between masters and slaves—the funeral meal is characterized by dark tones. The Saturnales dinner menu at SS Vest 170 is simple, but appetizing, although it seems to be missing the prima mensa, or starter: lentils, millet cake with minced meat, and egg flan with honey and pine nuts. Lentils *(lenticulae)* are mentioned more times by Steven Saylor, and in fact it is some "explosive" lentils with chorizo poisoned by Gordianus' daughter that end the life of the philosopher Dion in SS Ven 41, this being the only representation of poisoned food that appears in novels—and that in the popular imagination was so typical of the Romans. That it should not have been an unpopular dish is demonstrated by some of Apicius's recipes,26 and also by the mention in a poem by Martial, where he tells us that the best are those from Egypt.27 As for the millet cake *(millium),* it is again popular. be mentioned as mash in SS Ven 71 and 224. However, we have not found mention of millet in Apicius, and Friedlaender assures that it was not introduced in Rome until the first period of the Empire, and from the East Indies, thus We would, apparently, be facing an anachronism on the part of the author.

This seems to be the same case with the flan that Gordiano cooks for

25 In fact, we find the quote in II 58. 119.

26 Apic. 174 and 183-185.

27 Cf. Mart. XI 31 and XIII 9.

his slaves. Finally, when in SS 47 the character of Fabius wants to complain about the softness of the new Romans, the novelist puts the following bold statement in his mouth: “What else were the Romans going to talk about in these times, between plates of caviar and stuffed quail?” Although fish eggs were known and consumed, either in the form of garo or by themselves, we doubt that this can be translated by the word caviar, which has very special characteristics and quite typical of Russian gastronomy.

The funeral meal acquires the very curious connotation that all foods are dark. In SS Just 170 Saylor presents us with what appears to be an innovation:

> According to tradition, it would have to be frugal and simple: plain bread, lentils without sauce, diluted wine and mashed cereals. As an innovation, Gelina's cook had included several delicacies, all black: fish roe served in brown bread crust, pickled eggs dyed black, black olives, and fish marinated in squid ink.

In SSAp 56, after the assassination of Publius Clodius, these characteristics are repeated, but emphasis is no longer placed on their novelty, so we must deduce that it had already become custom, or, it is an invention of Saylor himself: “ Enormous quantities of food arrived (grandiose containers full of black pudding, jars of black beans, slices of black bread, all appropriately black for a party in honor of the dead, sprinkled with wine the color of blood).”

Some dishes are especially celebrated throughout the novels: some onions in wine are described as tasty in SS Ven 238; SS Just 89 praises Bayas green beans and, specifically, the green beans with cilantro and chopped chives that Gelina prepares.

Some glazed turnips in SS Ap 194 are celebrated by Gordianus the Hound; Incidentally, the author provides us with the recipe: “A pinch of cumin, a little garlic, honey, vinegar, oil and a pinch of rue. “My mother always said that root vegetables call for hot sauce.” Recipe that, in short, comes directly from the book of Apicius: “Tubers or turnips: you take them out once boiled, then you grind a lot of cumin, less rue, Parthian lasserpicio, honey,

vinegar, juice, grapes and oil in moderation. You will boil it and serve it."28

In SS Vest 33, Gordiano tells us that "the battered fish and radishes with cumin sauce that Bethesda had prepared were very bland, but not so bad as to make one sick." The batter *(cibos perfringendos in pultem intin-gere* or *immergere)* was also traditional in Roman cuisine.

Maddox and Saylor recreate the Roman culinary tradition based on its own literature, on the one hand culinary, as would be the case of the famous Apicius recipe book, and on the other, using the memory of authors who, such as Marcial, Juvenal or Petronio, have transmitted a more or less concrete idea of what the Roman banquet was and what its own physiology of taste consisted of. Maddox and Saylor, as researchers who locate their mysteries in times for which they must be historically documented, know this legend of Roman waste; but they do not use it, except in very specific cases such as that of the hedonist Lucius Licinius Lucullus, and they focus rather on highlighting what Roman culinary culture has of greatest interest: its own idiosyncrasy, which separates it so much from ours, but which nevertheless makes it so appetizing. As we say, except in extreme and peculiar cases, the authors search the traditional Roman recipe book and find everything in it that is most evocative, exotic and whimsical, and therefore, they sympathetically follow Apicius and Petronius, leaving aside the aforementioned moralists except when their characters want to highlight, precisely, that there was a before and after in the p

28 Apic. 100: Rapas sive napos. Elixatos exprimes, deinde teres cuminum plurimum, rutam minus, laser parthicum, mel, acetum, liquamen, defritum et oleum modice. Feruere facies et inferes.

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1 Throughout this book we have mentioned the novels and their pages using a simple abbreviation method consisting of: author's acronym, abbreviation of the novel title and page number or numbers. Steven Saylor becomes SS in its abbreviation, John Maddox Roberts JMR and Joaquín Borrell JB. Thus, when we wanted to mention (for example) page 68 of The Mystery of the Amulet, by John Maddox Roberts, or quote a fragment of said page, we did so in the following way: JMR Mist 68. This list complete list of novels is followed by the bibliographic data of the editions that I have handled.

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