

Authenticity, Class, and Education: The Anti-Intellectualism of Petronius
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I. Introduction

- Issues of literature, rhetoric, and education are a main theme.
- He cannot be making fun of intellectualism.
- Rather, he is making fun of faux-intellectualism.

II. Encolpius and the *Scholastici*

- Not elite, but educated amateur rhetoric buffs.
 - Many more of lower classes were getting education.
- Enc. makes fun of rhetoric, but exemplifies it.
- His skills are useless in his lower-class world.
 - He can only “cadge dinners.”
 - He is only successful when he’s relating to his own problems.

III. Trimalchio and the Freedmen

- Though rich, he is a buffoon whose attempts to seem intellectual fail.
- But he gained wealth through skill, dominates guests.
- Tries to be more than just a freedman, but he cannot.
- Boyce ling. analysis: he overcorrects to sound smart.
- Freedmen
 - The attention to accuracy with language belies sympathy.
 - They are successful urban professionals.
 - They behave quite normally, down-to-earth.
- Hermeros, as good example
 - Stands up for friend, attacks education of Ascyltus.
 - Boasts his lack of education.
 - His self-satisfaction would do wonders for Trimalchio.

IV. Eumolpus and His Stories

- Practicing poet, but poor.
 - protests that he cares not for money, but bamboozles without qualm.
- Complains about the decline of fine arts, but nonsensically.
- Terrible poet.
 - everyone complains or stones him
 - *Troiae Halosis* and *Bellum Civile* are trite and derivative
- His stories are great
 - Pergamum, Baths, Widow of Ephesus all elicit responses
 - Are authentic to himself and his surroundings.

V. Conclusion

- All the characters fail when being pretentious, and succeed when being

- authentic.
- Happiest and most successful are the Freedmen, who remain true to themselves.
- Education of lower-classes is silly, useless, but most importantly, counter-productive to their own well-being.

Quotations

Tacitus, Ann. 16.18: "...inter paucos familiarium Neroni adsumptus est, elegantiae arbiter, dum nihil amoenum et molle adfluentia putat, nisi quod ei Petronius adprobavisset."

"he was chosen by Nero to be one of his few intimate associates, as a critic in matters of taste, while the emperor thought nothing charming or elegant in luxury unless Petronius had expressed to him his approval of it."

(Alfred John Church, William Jackson Brodrigg)

Petr. 1 - Encolpius: "Et ideo ego adulescentulos existimo in scholis stultissimos fieri, quia nihil ex his, quae in usu habemus, aut audiunt aut vident..."

"And therefore I think that young men are becoming morons in schools, because they neither hear nor see anything from them which is considered useful..."

Petr. 2 - Encolpius: "People who are fed on this diet can no more be sensible than people who live in the kitchen can be savoury. With your permission I must tell you the truth, that you teachers more than anyone have been the ruin of true eloquence." (Michael Heseltine)

Petr. 3 - Agamemnon says that most teachers are "sicut ficti adulescentes cum cenis divitum captant."

Petr. 57 - Hermeros: "...tibi non placent lautitiae domini mei? Tu enim beatior es et convivare melius soles."

Petr. 58 - Hermeros: "Non didici geometrias, critica et alogias menias, sed lapidarias litteras scio, partes centum dico ad aes, ad pondus, ad nummum. [...] Iam scies patrem tuum mercedes perdidisse, quamvis et rhetoricam scis."

"No, I never learned geometry, and criticism, and suchlike nonsense. But I know my tall letters, and I can do any sum into pounds, shillings, and pence. Now I will show you that your father wasted the fees, even though you are a scholar in rhetoric." (Michael Heseltine)

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