

Listening to Eumolpus: a Reevaluation of the *Satyricon*'s Sweet-Singing Songster

In this paper I evaluate Petronius' fictional poet Eumolpus contextually, free from the generalities, assumptions, and stereotypes that have pervaded scholarly discourse concerning him. Many modern scholars seem to have taken it for granted that Eumolpus is a bad poet (Connors, Courtney, Schmeling), while others have offered more nuanced takes on his poetry (Zeitlin, Müller, Elsner, Setaioli). A systematic reevaluation of Eumolpus' poems has yet to be conducted, however, with attention to his creative stylistic features, which include syntactic enactment, the use of loaded word order to enhance meaning, puns, and metaliterary turns. An analysis of the contexts in which Eumolpus recites poetry will reveal that many of the scholars who deride his work do so in implicit agreement with the negative judgments passed by the other characters in the *Satyricon*, though these characters (especially the narrator Encolpius) are notoriously unreliable. My main method will thus be a close reading of Eumolpus' poetry and the reactions to his poetry in the text, with an eye toward a critical reevaluation of the often-neglected Petronian poet.

Bibliography

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