

Theatre and spectacle

criticism:

G. Rosati, 'Trimalchio on Stage' in Harrison (1999) 1999. *Oxford readings in the Roman novel*. P85-104: e.g. p87 "Trimalchio stages the play of his own life inside the *triclinium*"; p87 "The banquet-show is articulated into a series of courses whose staging follows well-established procedures. These are well known to all habitual guests.."; p89 on how theatre and culinary stage coincide in Ajax chopping up calf 59.7; p91 T as director and actor: shows off with poetry, cultural talk, philosophy. Backdrop of companies e.g. Homeristae, acrobats. Nb mime (e.g. 68.3; gags of Habinnas' slave, 68-, tricks of Daedalus (70.7, 13) and guests (64.2-5); various instances of applause; p92 amazement a recurrent theme. p93 "a number of different indications suggest that the 'show' element, in its various aspects, from theatre to the circus to gladiatorial munera, is central to the *Satyricon*"; guests familiar with the *ludi*. p94 "...Encolpius' eye, which is Petronius' filter, seems particularly inclined to focus on the more theatrical aspects of reality, and to interpret the world through categories learned by going to the theatre."

C. Panayotakis, *Theatrum Arbitri: Theatrical Elements in Petronius' Cena Trimalchionis* (Leiden, 1995): looks at influence of mime and other theatrical performances (reviewed by Slater in the online review journal *BMCR*: "While claiming a number of direct stage influences (e.g., that the hunting scenes on couch coverings introduced at 40.1 function like painted mime scenery or that the *mulionum fata* of 69.5 are related to mimes about mule-drivers), Panayotakis cautiously concludes in the end that the mime influence is here subordinate to that of satire in the overall composition of the *Cena*.")

Frangoulidis, S. 2008. 'Trimalchio as Narrator and Stage Director in the *Cena*: An Unobserved Parallelism in Petronius' *Satyricon* 78' *Classical Philology*, 103.1: 81-87 (discusses T as stage-director who can't control everything, as evident in the finale)

(for theatrical setting on Neronian Rome, see intro lecture; *Petronius: A handbook* has an article by Hales which brings in theatrical context)

Various scenes (including culinary tricks) stage-managed by T. a theatre-producer. See his discussion of tomb and funeral at end. Schmeling comments: "T. had invited Habinnas ... as a necessary actor in his stage presentation, with whom he planned to discuss his tomb: not just any guest would fulfil this need. T. had also invited C. Iulius Proculus, an undertaker 938.15), who probably would have played a role in the play like habinnas, when at 78.5 T. said *fingite me ... mortuum esse*. It is one of Proculus' slaves who sounds the funeral horn so loudly that the fire brigade breaks down T.'s door and brings the *Cena* to an end, before Proculus could recite his lines."

T also = actor (taking on roles such as kind master /arrogant master, as well as performing poetry etc). Shows staged e.g. Homeristae (59) + references to drama (54 T says he prefers Atellan farce to New Comedy)

Allusions to mime permeate the scene (e.g. Trimalchio sings mime songs 35 *atque ipse etiam taeterrima voce de Laserpicario mimo canticum extorsit*).

There is also a gladiatorial motif running through the narrative (e.g. 34), fitting the scenes of combat which adorn the entrance walls and goblets (52) and matching the freedmen's obsession with the games.

Theatricality flagged up by theatrical terminology (e.g. 27 *spectaculum*: show starts before "theatre" of dinner; 33 5 *scaenam*: "scene, tableau" (Smith); a dinner-theatre; 36.8 *ludos*: suggestive of theatrical spectacle) + Encolpius' observations (of singing servants, 31: *pantomimi chorum, non patris familiae triclinium crederes*) + reaction of guests (e.g. 36 *damus omnes plausum*)

- What is effect? Why interest in acting/spectacle?

The notion of a show is relevant to a character who is constantly trying to construct a self-image, in life as in death.

Theme of spectacle and interpretation relevant for text: we watch/interpret narrator

watching/interpreting T; + audience watches the games; we watch the games and the audience's reaction.

Effect on us readers? Does the idea of the episode as a spectacle distance or draw us in? Does show atmosphere preclude severe criticism + lessen our ridicule of Trimalchio? Do we, like Encolpius, start to lose our sophisticated detachment as we are caught up in the mad atmosphere? Atmosphere is that of the Saturnalia, the festival at which slaves could temporarily change roles with their masters, when things were turned on their head. Cf. *Sat.* 58 + 69.