

TRIMALCHIO AND THE CANDELABRUM

Toward the end of the banquet of Trimalchio a quarrel with his wife, Fortunata, prompts the host to maudlin self-justification in the form of autobiography. The well-known passage in which Trimalchio traces his rise from slavery to freedom and prosperity begins abruptly with an account of his arrival in the new world (Petron. *Sat.* 75. 10–11):

tam magnus ex Asia veni quam hic candelabrus est. ad summam, quotidie me solebam ad illum metiri, et ut celerius rostrum barbatum haberem, labra de lucerna ungebam. tamen ad delicias [femina] ipsimi [domini] annos quattuordecim fui. nec turpe est quod dominus iubet. ego tamen et ipsimae [dominae] satis faciebam. scitis quid dicam: taceo, quia non sum de gloriosis.

Commentators call attention to the vivid language (*candelabrus*, *rostrum*), and the phrase *annos quattuordecim* has recently come under scrutiny,¹ but no one has remarked what is surely the most arresting feature of the passage: the conspicuous presence in Trimalchio's dining room of a memento of the days when his youthful charms exposed him to the unwelcome sexual attentions of his owner.² In the seventeenth century Reinesius adduced the medical writers Aëtius and Alexander of Tralles as witnesses to the ancient belief that topical application of lamp oil could stimulate the growth of hair, thereby vindicating both Trimalchio's cosmetic techniques and Petronius' verisimilitude;³ but neither Reinesius nor any subsequent scholar has endeavored to explain Trimalchio's peculiar attachment to the candelabrum, an object associated with what was—as his defensive justification (*nec turpe est quod dominus iubet*) suggests—a rather unsavory period of his life. With Trimalchio, of course, eccentric behavior needs no special justification, but here something more than a taste for the absurd prompted Petronius to associate Trimalchio's role as *puer delicatus* with that particular piece of household furniture. Pliny the Elder supplies the clue.

In remarking the high prices paid for lampstands, Pliny recounts the story of a slave, Clesippus, who once came into the possession of a wealthy woman, Geganias, as a bonus accompanying an expensive candelabrum that she bought at auction (*HN* 34. 11–12):⁴

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1. By M. D. Reeve, "A Change in Trimalchio's Life," *Phoenix* 39 (1985): 378–79, and by T. Wade Richardson, "Further on the Young Trimalchio," *Phoenix* 40 (1986): 201.

2. The young Trimalchio's submission to his master in itself would not have excited much comment in antiquity: cf., e.g., K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control*, Collection Latomus, vol. 185 (Brussels, 1984; repr. Oxford, 1987), pp. 117–18; A. Watson, *Roman Slave Law* (Baltimore, 1987), p. 119; in general, R. MacMullen, "Roman Attitudes to Greek Love," *Historia* 31 (1982): 495–99. To keep a conversation piece commemorating the relationship is another matter. For the Roman practice of keeping small children around for more innocent amusements, see W. J. Slater, "Pueri, Turba Minuta," *BICS* 21 (1974): 133–40, esp. p. 135.

3. Reinesius' comments are now most accessible in the two editions of P. Burmann (Utrecht, 1709; Amsterdam, 1743); cf. Aët. 1. 100, Alex. Trall. *Febr.* 1. 2.

4. For Pliny's systematic use of such anecdotes, see A. Locher, "The Structure of Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*," in *Science in the Early Roman Empire: Pliny the Elder, His Sources and Influence*, ed. R. French and F. Greenaway (London, 1986), pp. 20–29 (p. 24 on Clesippus).

accessio candelabri talis fuit Theonis iussu praeconis Clesippus fullo gibber et praeterea et alio foedus aspectu, emente id Gegania HS L. eadem ostentante in convivio empta, ludibrii causa nudatus atque inpudentia libidinis receptus in torum, mox in testamentum, praedives numinum vice illud candelabrum coluit et hanc Corinthiis fabulam adiecit, vindicatis tamen moribus nobili sepulchro, per quod aeterna supra terras Geganiae dedecoris memoria duraret.

The second sentence is typical of Pliny's most ambitious stylistic efforts: clarity and precision suffer at the expense of rhetorical conceits.⁵ The principal details are nonetheless clear. A humpback Clesippus, having aroused in his mistress an immoderate lust, found a place first in her bed and then in her will and never forgot the source of his good fortune, cherishing like a divinity the candelabrum to which he owed his ascendancy. The obvious broad similarities to the situation adumbrated in the *Satyricon*, though previously unobserved by Petronian specialists, have not gone wholly unnoticed,⁶ but the extent to which the two stories correspond has not perhaps been sufficiently recognized.

Clesippus—like Trimalchio, a freedman made rich by inheritance, thanks in part to his sexual services—shares with his fictional counterpart both a hideous appearance (cf. *Sat.* 28. 4: Trimalchio's pet is *domino Trimalchione deformior*) and, to judge from Pliny's reference to a magnificent tomb (*nobile sepulchrum*), a penchant for display. That both men should also unabashedly cherish a memento of a socially compromising period of their lives, and that the memento should in each case be a candelabrum, is too great a coincidence to attribute to accident. It seems likely that when Petronius had Trimalchio tell his tale of the lampstand, he expected his readers to remember the other, more famous story associated with Corinthian lampstands and to recognize the basic similarities between the two protagonists. This much, at least, can be inferred from Pliny's account.

But Pliny's is not the only record of Clesippus: a splendid limestone *titulus* more than three meters in length and bearing the name Clesipus Geganius survives today, built into the wall of a modern building on the Via Appia south of Rome near Terracina (*CIL* 1² 1004):⁷

Clesipus Geganius,
mag(ister) Capi[t](olinus), mag(ister) Luperc(or)um, viat(or) tr(ibunicius).

The name Clesippus is extremely rare in the Roman world, nor are Geganii much in evidence during the last years of the Republic, the period to which, on the basis of its orthography and lettering, the inscription can be assigned.⁸ Pliny does not date his anecdote, but the conclusion seems inescapable that the

5. See J. Müller, *Der Stil des älteren Plinius* (Innsbruck, 1883), pp. 24, 94–96, 106, and passim; cf. E. Norden's well-known condemnation of Pliny's style, *Die antike Kunstprosa*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1898), p. 314.

6. Cf. F. Münzer, "Geganius (3)," *RE* 7.1 (1910): 928, tentatively suggesting that Petronius made "free use" (*freie Verwendung*) of the story told by Pliny.

7. At Posta di Mesa; cf. *CIL* 1² 1004 = 10. 6488 = *ILS* 1924 = *ILLRP* 696; for a photograph, see A. Degraffi, *Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae, Imagines* (Berlin, 1965), p. 191, no. 259. The stone was found in the Pomptine Marshes.

8. Only two other Clesippi are attested at Rome (H. Solin, *Die griechischen Personennamen in Rom: Ein Namenbuch*, vol. 1 [Berlin, 1982], p. 100; cf. vol. 3, p. 1349), and the indexes to *CIL* show no other

humpback fuller and the minor official commemorated in the epitaph are one and the same.⁹ Whether the surviving inscription came from the tomb mentioned by Pliny is less certain, but the dimensions of the stone are consistent with his characterization of it as *sepulchrum nobile*, and there is every reason to believe that we have the *titulus* from that very monument.¹⁰

Be that as it may, Clesippus' epitaph naturally invites comparison with the epitaph that Trimalchio recites to his guests as the crowning touch in a detailed description of his own splendid monument (*Sat.* 71. 12):

C. Pompeius Trimalchio Maecenatianus hic requiescit. huic seviratus absenti decretus est. cum posset in omnibus decuriis Romae esse, tamen noluit. pius, fortis, fidelis, ex parvo crevit; sestertium reliquit trecenties, nec umquam philosophum audivit. vale et tu.

The first three sentences will bear close inspection, because they correspond, point by point and in the same order, to the three basic elements of the *cursus* recorded in Clesippus' epitaph: name, religious offices, and civil service.

J. H. D'Arms has recently shown that when Trimalchio professes a disinclination to pursue honors open to him (in this case, membership in any of the *decuriae* of *apparitores* at Rome) or claims to have been offered the position of *sevir Augustalis* in absentia, he graces the offices of a freedman with the diplomatic phrasing of a Roman knight. In particular, he apes the polite formulae of those wealthy equestrians who eschewed public honors for commercial or literary pursuits, without evident damage to their reputations. Such a man was Maecenas, whose prominence in Trimalchio's fictional heritage is reflected, in characteristically equivocal fashion, in his nomenclature, which is at once pretentious and transparent: the *agnomen* Maecenatianus, proclaiming an association with the great model of the powerful but unambitious equestrian, at the same time reveals its owner to be an ex-slave.¹¹

The difficulty for the historian or critic, as D'Arms points out, lies in distinguishing verisimilitude from caricature; for history has left us few clear guidelines by which to measure Petronius' sometimes faithful, sometimes subtly distorting image of Neronian society.¹² Because the social background against which Trimalchio is viewed often appears so hazy, the epitaph of Clesippus

instances of the name. For the republican Geganii, see F. Münzer, "Geganius," *RE* 7.1 (1910): 927–29 (add L. Giganus, the associate of Saturninus; cf. Münzer, "Giganus," *RE* 7.1 [1910]: 1355, and note *CIL* 6. 18945 with 6. 35380, of the same man), and R. M. Ogilvie, *A Commentary on Livy Books 1–5* (Oxford, 1965; repr. 1970), pp. 122–23 (on l. 30. 2). The date of the inscription ("Sulla–Caesar": Solin, *Die griechischen Personennamen*, 1:100) is secured also by the nomenclature and the offices recorded (see below).

9. So, first, D. Detlefsen, *Bullettino dell'Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* (1861): 10; recently, T. R. S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, vol. 3: *Supplement* (Atlanta, 1986), p. 99, s.v. "Clesippus Geganius" (and already in *MRR*, 2:27, s.v. "Geganius Clesippus").

10. See S. Mazzarino, "Aspetti di storia dell'Appia Antica," *Helikon* 8 (1968): 186–87, arguing against a widely held view (cf., e.g., H. Le Bonniec and H. Gallet de Santerre, eds., *Pline l'ancien: "Histoire naturelle," Livre XXXIV* [Paris, 1953], p. 176, n. 5) that the *nobile sepulchrum* to which Pliny refers must have been Gegania's.

11. See D'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), pp. 108–16, with E. Narducci, "Commercio e status sociale in Cicerone e in Petronio (a proposito di un recente libro di John H. D'Arms)," *QS* 10 (1984): 239–41; cf. P. Veyne, "Trimalchio Maecenatianus," in *Hommages à Albert Grenier*, Collection Latomus, vol. 58.3 (Brussels, 1962), pp. 1620–22.

12. Cf. D'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing*, pp. 97, 99.

assumes added importance: stripped of the incongruous elements that lend ambivalence to the portrait of Trimalchio, it suggests a not dissimilar picture of upward mobility and assertive individuality in the face of Roman upper-class prejudice.

To begin, the form of the name by which Clesippus—a freedman, if we accept the identification with the figure known to Pliny—chose to be remembered would have struck a contemporary Roman as doubly odd. Like Trimalchio, Clesippus omits the formal indication of freedman status from his nomenclature. That was unusual, particularly in his day;¹³ but more striking still is his use of his slave name as a *praenomen*, an affectation that he shares with only a handful of freedmen under the Republic.¹⁴ Either phenomenon in isolation might be due to a variety of causes, but the occurrence of both together in this instance—a combination unparalleled in Roman republican nomenclature—leaves little doubt that Clesippus intended to suppress the overt signs of his dependence upon his patroness and to magnify the importance of his given name. Neither Clesippus nor Trimalchio, it may be noted, is particularly concerned to conceal that he had been a slave. Rather, by their chosen nomenclature the two freedmen show their indifference to the social norms that denied respectability to an ex-slave on the basis of his origin. At the same time, they do not mention their patron or patroness, whose implicit influence might seem to diminish their own accomplishments. It is a combination designed to promote the image of the self-made man. In Trimalchio's epitaph we find this intention explicitly confirmed (*ex parvo crevit*); we can feel confident that it applies in Clesippus' case as well.

When we turn to Clesippus' career, we are immediately drawn to the final entry in his *cursus*, for the position of *viator tribunicius* guarantees his membership in one of the *decuriae* of *apparitores* so ostentatiously spurned by Trimalchio. Thanks to an excellent recent survey, we can now see the social and political milieu of the *apparitores* as the world of the social climber par excellence.¹⁵ In the ranks of the *decuriae* an ex-slave or a foreigner endowed with Roman citizenship could mingle with freeborn men of substance from the municipalities of central and western Italy, many of whom would go on to become Roman knights or local magistrates. The social and material benefits resulting from such contacts could be considerable. Inscriptional evidence, mostly of early imperial date, shows that the *decuriae* of messengers were the most prestigious of the sub-clerical grades, second only to the scribes in the subsequent political success of their members, and the highest order in which freedmen predominate. Above all, the viatorial *decuriae* seem to have been especially attractive to successful men of business, or at least those unashamed to record their occupations on

13. See esp. L. R. Taylor, "Freedmen and Freeborn in the Epitaphs of Imperial Rome," *AJP* 82 (1961): 118–22. Her estimate (p. 119) that only about 7 percent of names recorded on republican gravestones lack the status indication is generally borne out for freedmen; see G. Fabre, *Libertus: Recherches sur les rapports patron-affranchi à la fin de la république romaine*, Collection de l'École française de Rome, vol. 50 (Rome, 1981), pp. 114–16.

14. See Fabre, *Libertus*, pp. 103–4, esp. p. 104, n. 91, on the inscription of Clesippus.

15. See N. Purcell, "The *Apparitores*: A Study in Social Mobility," *PBSR* 38 (1983): 125–73, at p. 136. Trimalchio's reference to *decuriae*, without further specification, is in keeping with a tendency during the early Empire for the general status designation *decurialis* to replace the specific grade of employment on the tombstones of *apparitores*; see Purcell, p. 152, and cf. pp. 133–34.

their monuments.¹⁶ Trimalchio's claim to have been eligible for any of the panels at Rome is perhaps exaggerated, since some of the scribal *decuriae* seem to have been restricted to the freeborn;¹⁷ but Trimalchio certainly would have felt at home in the professional and social milieu of the men like Clesippus whose offices he pretended to disdain. Indeed, he would have encountered many of the same men in the ranks of the one public college of which he deigned to be a member, the *Augustales*.¹⁸

The *Augustales*, of course, are an imperial phenomenon, but Clesippus found a similar outlet for his social ambition in two of the formal religious organizations of his community, the *Capitolini* and the *Luperci*. It would be beside the point to compare the religious or civic functions of the municipal and urban priesthoods other than to note that all three would have appealed to men like Trimalchio and Clesippus because of the opportunities they provided for formally sanctioned and hence respectable public display.¹⁹ In order to place Clesippus more precisely we need to know the significance in late republican society of the *Luperci* and the *Capitolini*, whose functions were later superseded by the Augustan compitalicial cult.

Cicero, as often, can serve as a useful social barometer, since his own position is well known. In a letter to his brother in April 56, Cicero reported that the *Capitolini* and the *Mercuriales* (a merchants' association) had expelled from their number a Roman knight whom he described as worthless (*nequam*: *QFr.* 2. 6. 3 = 10 Shackleton Bailey); a decade later he complained to Atticus that Quintus was preening himself overmuch on his son's recent appointment to a board of *Luperci* (*Att.* 12. 5. 1 = 242 S.B.). The two notices, which perhaps are not unrelated,²⁰ suggest that either position would befit the *dignitas* of a Roman knight of upright character but unproven reputation. Above all, we perceive the successful new man's lively interest in the familiar game of social advancement being played out at a less exalted level. Elsewhere Cicero shows that in his day the brotherhood of the *Luperci* could be made to appear less than respectable;²¹ but Julius Caesar's creation of a new college of *Luperci* bearing his family name proves the latent political potency of the organization.²² Inscriptions confirm

16. Ibid., pp. 152–54. During the late Republic *lictores* ranked before *viatores* in the provinces, and their social standing may generally have been higher (cf. T. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*³, vol. 1 [Leipzig, 1887], p. 355); but the evidence for Rome and its vicinity suggests that ambitious freedmen had always gravitated to the ranks of the *viatores*; cf. S. Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen during the Late Republic* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 156–57, and Purcell, "Apparitores," pp. 131–33.

17. So D'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing*, p. 110.

18. See *Sat.* 30. 2; cf. 57. 6 (Hermeros), 65. 5 (Habinnas), and R. Duthoy, "La fonction sociale de l'Augustalité," *Epigraphica* 36 (1974): 143–44.

19. For the *Capitolini*, who sponsored the *ludi Capitolini* in October, and the *Luperci*, whose annual rite is well known, see, respectively, Habel, "Ludi Capitolini," *RE Suppl.* 5 (1931): 607–8, and Ogilvie, *Commentary*, pp. 51–52, 776. For the *Augustales*, see R. Duthoy, "Les 'Augustales,'" *ANRW* 2.16.2 (1978): 1301–5, and note *Sat.* 71. 9 (Trimalchio's tomb) with A. Maiuri, *La "Cena di Trimalchione" di Petronio Arbitro* (Naples, 1945), pp. 211–12 (ad loc.).

20. Cf. C. Nicolet, *L'ordre équestre à l'époque républicaine (312–43 av. J.C.)*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1974), pp. 891–93, no. 162 (at p. 892).

21. Cf. *Cael.* 26, with R. G. Austin, ed., *M. Tulli Ciceronis "Pro M. Caelio" Oratio*³ (Oxford, 1960), pp. 80–81 (ad loc.); and, on Antony's scandalous behavior at the Lupercalia of 44, *Phil.* 2. 85–86, 3. 12, 13. 31.

22. See R. E. A. Palmer, *The Archaic Community of the Romans* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 135–36. Following the Augustan reform of the brotherhood, the cult festival came to be associated particularly with the knights; cf. G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*² (Munich, 1912), pp. 560–61.

that within the civic sphere the *Capitolini* and *Luperci*, like the *viatores* in the professional sphere, were often men on the make whose birth or wealth prevented them, at least temporarily, from pursuing higher goals.²³

The levels of society in which these men moved served during the late Republic and early Empire as a sort of buffer zone between classes, a neutral area in which the lowest echelons of the higher orders overlapped with the highest of the lower. The same office that served an ambitious young equestrian as a stepping stone to greater economic opportunities might equally well represent the jewel in the crown of honors bestowed upon a wealthy ex-slave. Freeborn and freedmen here filled the same ranks; here, if anywhere in Roman society, conventional status distinctions became blurred and were subordinated to the common goal of social advancement.²⁴

Considered together with the evidence of his nomenclature, the record of Clesippus' public career enables us to recognize in Petronius' allusion a more apposite comparison than the simple anecdote related by Pliny indicates. Clesippus' epitaph combines a declaration of humble origins with a record of honors to which a rising knight might aspire. This striking combination puts Trimalchio's peculiarly ambivalent epitaph—itsself merely an extension of his own contradictory personality—in a somewhat different perspective, and the seemingly incongruous conjunction of servile birth and equestrian pretensions that we find in him begins to appear the product less of caricature than of verisimilitude.²⁵ We need not assume that Petronius expected his readers to be familiar with the details of Clesippus' career, either from his monument or from popular report (though either might have been the case). If we are to believe the literary sources, Julio-Claudian Rome was alive with similar figures. Presented with one of their type and given a few broad strokes of characterization, Petronius' readers could effortlessly sketch in the correct nuances of social background with a sureness of touch that we can never hope to equal.

Nor is it likely, given the provenance of our only version of Clesippus' story, that Petronius exploited a literary model for his adaptation. F. Münzer suggested that Pliny's anecdote may owe something to a lost epigram of Domitius Marsus, whom Pliny lists as one of his sources for Book 34 (*HN* 1. 34),²⁶ but that possibility, and the further speculation that Petronius may have drawn upon the same source, must be weighed against Pliny's explicit statement that Clesippus' tale had become generally associated with Corinthian ware, a subject on which Petronius' readers can be expected to have been well informed.²⁷ Word of

23. Cf. Treggiari, *Roman Freedmen*, pp. 196–97 (at p. 196, n. 5, for *CIL* 14. 2105—on which see Nicolet. *L'ordre équestre*, 2:892—read *CIL* 11. 7804 = *ILS* 9039); cf. also *CIL* 1² 2992 = *ILLRP* 697, a *mag(ister) Capitolinus quinq(uennalis)*; *CIL* 6. 33421 and *CIL* 11. 3205 = *ILS* 4948, both *Luperci Fabiani*.

24. A similar mixture of social classes is found among the Campanian *magistri* at Capua (*CIL* 1² 672–91, 2506, 2944–50; cf. M. Frederiksen, *Campania*, ed. N. Purcell [Rome, 1984], pp. 264–68, 286–87, 323) and at Herculaneum on the local board of *Augustales*, where freedmen and freeborn were registered in different *centuriae* according to their civil status; cf. S. E. Ostrow, "Augustales along the Bay of Naples: A Case for Their Early Growth," *Historia* 34 (1985): 78–81.

25. For the prevailing view, that Trimalchio's equestrian affectations are meant to indicate only his rank within his own order (of freedmen), see P. Veyne, "Vie de Trimalcion," *Annales (ESC)* 16 (1961): 244–46.

26. *Beiträge zur Quellenkritik der "Naturgeschichte" des Plinius* (Berlin, 1897), pp. 100–101.

27. Cf. B. Baldwin, "Trimalchio's Corinthian Plate," *CP* 68 (1973): 46–48; id., "Hannibal at Troy: The Sources of Trimalchio's Confusion," *Petronian Society Newsletter* 17. 1–2 (1987): 6 (on 50. 5).

mouth, then, may be invoked as the most probable source of the common knowledge Petronius expected of his readers. Recognizing the historical basis of the allusion frees us from the need to search for a contemporary, literary topicality that is neither suggested nor required. Poignancy and concinnity are the qualities that recommended the story of Clesippus in the present context, and Petronius' reference to it may suggest that such qualities, rather than currency or court politics, were often the more important criteria in determining his literary priorities.²⁸

The allusion to Clesippus serves a formal purpose as well, for the episode of the candelabrum fits into a pattern of corresponding details that articulate the *Cena*'s elaborate narrative structure. At one level, the reference to Clesippus at the beginning of Trimalchio's life story balances the long-recognized allusion at the end to Pacuvius, the legate of Syria who is said to have indulged daily in sympotic celebration of his own mock funeral (*Sat.* 78. 5–6; cf. *Sen. Epist.* 12. 8). The two historical allusions anchor Trimalchio's fictional autobiography in reality at either end and neatly exemplify its rags-to-riches theme: in Petronius' vulgar host the eccentricities of the successful ex-slave and those of the debauched aristocrat "qui Syriam usu suam fecit" (*Sen. Epist.* 12. 8) find a common home.

At another level, the detail of the candelabrum conforms to a pattern of ring composition that has been detected elsewhere in the *Cena*.²⁹ Just as Trimalchio's dramatic exit (78. 5–6) recalls the stately cortege from the public baths to his home (28. 4–5),³⁰ so the candelabrum (75. 10) recalls another monument to Trimalchio's pubescence prominently displayed in his home, the *pyxys aurea non pusilla* enshrined in a large armarium in his portico, where the clippings from his first beard are said to be stored (29. 8). Here, too, a historical allusion has been suspected—to the emperor Nero, who is reported to have dedicated on the Capitoline an *aurea pyxis* containing his first beard.³¹ That Petronius meant to suggest a comparison between the freedman and the *princeps* is not certain; what is certain is that the candelabrum and its association with Trimalchio's coming of age link the recounting of Trimalchio's career (75. 10–77. 7) to the mural depicting it at the beginning of the banquet (29. 3–6) and thus contribute to the unity of the entire episode.

Finally, in view of the connections outlined above, it seems likely that Petronius intended Trimalchio's account of his days as *puer delicatus* to remind us of the incident that precipitated the argument with Fortunata and the denouement of the banquet: Trimalchio's inordinate display of affection for a *puer non in-speciosus* (74. 8) whose talents and promise (75. 4) put us in mind of the young

28. For a different view, see J. P. Sullivan, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nero* (Ithaca, 1985), pp. 153–79, esp. pp. 161, 173.

29. See T. K. Hubbard, "The Narrative Architecture of Petronius' *Satyricon*," *AC* 55 (1986): 194–201.

30. On the funereal atmosphere of Trimalchio's arrival and departure, see D. Gagliardi, "Il corteo di Trimalchione: Nota a Petron. 28, 4–5," *RFIC* 112 (1984): 285–87.

31. Suet. *Nero* 12. 4, Cass. Dio 61. 19. 1; cf. K. F. C. Rose, *The Date and Author of the "Satyricon,"* *Mnemosyne Supplement*, vol. 16 (Leiden, 1971), pp. 78, 83; contra, M. S. Smith, *Petronii Arbitri "Cena Trimalchionis"* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 60–61.

Trimalchio himself.³² In this case the reference is both retrospective and proleptic, inviting us to recognize in Trimalchio's behavior a reflection of the preferential treatment he himself had received in his master's household (63. 3; cf. 76. 1) and to foresee for the young slave a successful career similar to that of his benefactor. This brings us full circle to the original basis of the allusion to Clesippus, the humble, even sordid, origins from which he rose to prosperity and social prominence. In Roman society no freedman could fully escape the stigma of his servile past: that reality lies at the heart of Petronius' portrait of an aspiring social climber, and that reality ultimately makes Trimalchio, like Clesippus, a pathetic as well as a comic figure.

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32. Well observed by R. Schievenin, "Trimalchione e il *puer non inspeciosus* (Petron. 75. 5)," *BSL* 6 (1976): 302. Note also 73. 6 "*hodie servus meus barbatoriam fecit*," introducing the banquet's "second act" (cf. Hubbard, "Narrative Architecture," p. 203).

AULUS GELLIUS AND THE PROPERTY QUALIFICATIONS OF THE *PROLETARII* AND THE *CAPITE CENSI*

In *Noctes Atticae* 16. 10. 10–13, Aulus Gellius explains the word *proletarii* and describes the place these citizens held in the political and military structure of republican Rome. The passage is unique, in that Gellius distinguishes between the terms *proletarii* and *capite censi*, which elsewhere refer to the same group, and specifies different property qualifications for each. Gellius' account has been accepted by some scholars.¹ Others have rejected it, entirely or in part, but have not explained where the error lies.² A close examination of the passage in question reveals that he, or his source, made a single simple error and then constructed an elaborate scheme to explain it.

The Roman census system was fundamental to the political and military organization of the Roman Republic.³ At regular intervals citizens were required to declare the value of their property to the censors. On the basis of these declarations the censors would assign each citizen to one of a large number of centuries, which served as the voting units in the *comitia centuriata*. Most of the centuries were in turn assigned to one of five property classes, each with its own minimum property qualification. Those whose centuries belonged in one of these classes were called *assidui* and were eligible for service in the legions. Below the fifth and lowest class there was a single century of *proletarii*, those with little or no property, who served in the army only in emergencies.

1. See T. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*³, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1888), p. 230; G. W. Botsford, *The Roman Assemblies* (New York, 1909), pp. 84–91; A. Rosenberg, *Untersuchungen zur römischen Zenturienverfassung* (Berlin, 1911), pp. 42–43.

2. See E. Gabba, *Esercito e società nella tarda repubblica romana* (Florence, 1973), p. 9; P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower 225 B.C.–A.D. 14* (Oxford, 1971), p. 403, n. 3; M. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, vol. 2 (London, 1974), p. 625, n. 6.

3. The census is described in detail in G. Pieri, *L'histoire du cens jusqu'à la fin de la République romaine* (Paris, 1968).