

# Ideal Freedmen Lives?

## The Construction of Biographies in the *cena Trimalchionis*

Richard Gamauf

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# C. Pompeius Diogenes

§ 38 (6) *Reliquos autem collibertos eius cave contemnas.* (7) *valde sucossi sunt. vides illum qui in imo imus recumbit: hodie sua octingenta possidet. de nihilo crevit.* (8) *modo solebat collo suo ligna portare. sed quomodo dicunt ego nihil scio, sed audivi – quom Incuboni pilleum rapuisset, et thesaurum invenit. ego nemini invideo, si quid deus dedit.* (9) *est tamen sub alapa et non vult sibi male.*

„But don't put down them other freedmen. They're loaded. The one in the lowest place on the lowest couch – **eight hundred thousand at the moment. Grew from nothing. Not long ago used to carry wood on his back.** They say – I don't know a thing about it. I've just heard – he stole a gnome's hat and found a treasure. But he's kind of a blowhard, wants to show how good he's doing.

§ 43 (1) ... *Ille habet, quod sibi debebatur: honeste vixit, honeste obiit. quid habet quod queratur? ab asse crevit et paratus fuit quadrantem de stercore mordicus tollere. itaque crevit, quicquid crevit, tamquam favus.* (2) *puto mehercules illum reliquisse solida centum, et omnia in nummis habuit. ... (4) vendidit enim vinum quantum ipse voluit. Et quod illius mentum sustulit, hereditatem accepit, ex qua plus involavit quam illi relictum est.*

He got what was owing to him. Decent life, decent death. What has he got to complain about? **He had it made, started from nothing, and he would have taken a penny out of a manure pile with his teeth. Everything he touched grew like a honeycomb.** By Hercules, I think he left a good hundred thousand, all in cash.

He could sell as much wine as he had. And what really gave him a lift was that he got an inheritance that gave him a chance to swipe more than he got left.

# Trimalchio's grave inscription

§ 71 (12) *Inscriptio quoque vide diligenter si haec satis idonea tibi videtur: 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 sestertivum reliquit trecenties. nec unquam philosophum audivit. vale: et tu!*

And see what you think of his inscription: 'Here lies Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio, Freedman of Maecenas. He was elected sevir, though he was not even here to campaign. He could have been in all of the guilds at Rome, but he said no. He had old-fashioned values, he was brave, faithful, and he started small and made it big. He left a fortune of thirty million sesterces. He never in his life paid any attention to a philosopher. Farewell to him. And to you, stranger.'

# Trimalchio II

76.2: .... **accepi patrimonium laticlavium. (3) nemini tamen nihil satis est. concupivi negotiari. ... omnes naves naufragarunt. factum, non fabula. uno die Neptunus trecenties sestertium devoravit. ... alteras (scil.naves) feci maiores ... hoc loco Fortunata rem piam fecit: omne enim aurum suum, omnia vestimenta vendidit et mi centum aureos in manu posuit. (8) hoc fuit peculii mei fermentum. cito fit quod di volunt. uno cursu centies sestertium corrotundavi.**  
....

... I got a senator's fortune. But nobody's ever got enough of nothing. I had this itch to go into business. ... every one got wrecked. It's truth I'm telling you; I didn't make this up. Neptune ate up thirty million sesterces ... I built more ships, that was bigger and better and luckier. ... And Fortunata did a real loyal thing: she sold all her jewelry and all her clothes and put a hundred gold coins in my hand. That was the yeast that started my fortune rising. „Well, what the gods want to happen happens fast. On that one trip I pilled up ten million sesterces. ....

§ 37 (2) *Uxor, inquit, Trimalchionis, Fortunata appellatur, quae nummos modio metitur.* (3) *et modo, modo quid fuit? ignoscet mihi genius tuus, noluisse de manu illius panem accipere. nunc, nec quid nec quare, in caelum abiit et Trimalchionis topanta est. ...* (6) *ipse (scil Trimalchio) nescit quid habeat, adeo saplutus est; sed haec lupatria providet omnia, et ubi non putes est.* (7) *sicca, sobria, bonorum consiliorum: tantum auri vides. ...*

„She’s Trimalchio’s wife,“ he said,  
„called Fortunata, don’t count her money, measures it in bushel baskets. And what was she a little bit ago? Your guardian spirit is gonna have to forgive me for saying this: you wouldn’t of wanted to take bread from her hand. Now she’s on top of the world somehow or other – she’s Trimalchio’s all or nothing. ... Himself doesn’t know what he’s got: he’s that loaded. But that whore takes care of everything, she’s everywhere – you wouldn’t believe it. She’s dry sober, knows exactly what she’s talking about. You can see where all this gold comes from.

§ 74.13 *Quid enim inquit,  
**ambubaia non meminit se? de  
machina illam sustuli, hominem  
inter homines feci.** at inflat se  
tanquam rana, et in sinum suum  
non sputit, codex, non mulier. sed  
hic, qui in pergula natus est,  
aedes non somniatur. ita genium  
meum propitium habeam, curabo  
domata sit Cassandra caligaria.*

„The slut’s forgotten everything. I took her out off the auction block and made a human being out of her. But now she’s all puffed up like a frog, thinks her luck’s endless. She’s got no more sense than a block of wood. Maybe somebody born in a hut, shouldn’t dream about a mansion. So help me I’m gonna put her in her place – she’s nothin’ but a bitch in army boots.

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§ 57 Eques Romanus es?. Et ego **regis filius**. Quare ergo servivisti? Quia ipse **me dedi in servitatem** et malui civis Romanus esse quam tributarius. ... **Homo inter homines sum, capite aperto ambulo** ... contubernalem meam redemi, **ne qui in illius capillis manus tergeret**; ... Annis quadraginta servivi; **nemo tamen scit utrum servus essem an liber**. ... Dedi tamen operam ut domino satis facerem, homini maiesto et dignitosso, cuius pluris erat unguis quam tu totus es.

You're a Roman knight? Sure, and I'm a king's son. So why was I a slave? I volunteered. I thought it was better to become a Roman citizen someday than stay a provincial just payin' the taxes. ... I'm a man good as any other, walk with my head high and don't hide from nobody. ... I bought my partner out of slavery, to keep her master's dirty hands off her. I was a slave for forty years, but nobody knew whether I was a slave or free. ... But I took care to live up to my master's expectations. He was the finest man that ever was – his little pinkie was worth more than all of you is.

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# Trimalchio: me in tribunali sedentem praetextatum cum anulis aureis quinque et nummos in publico de sacculo effundentem

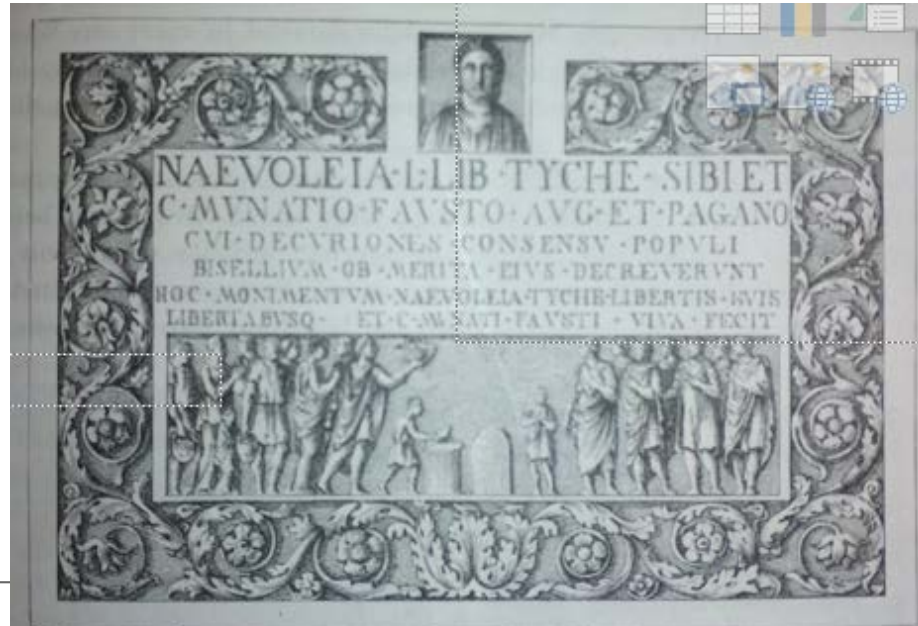
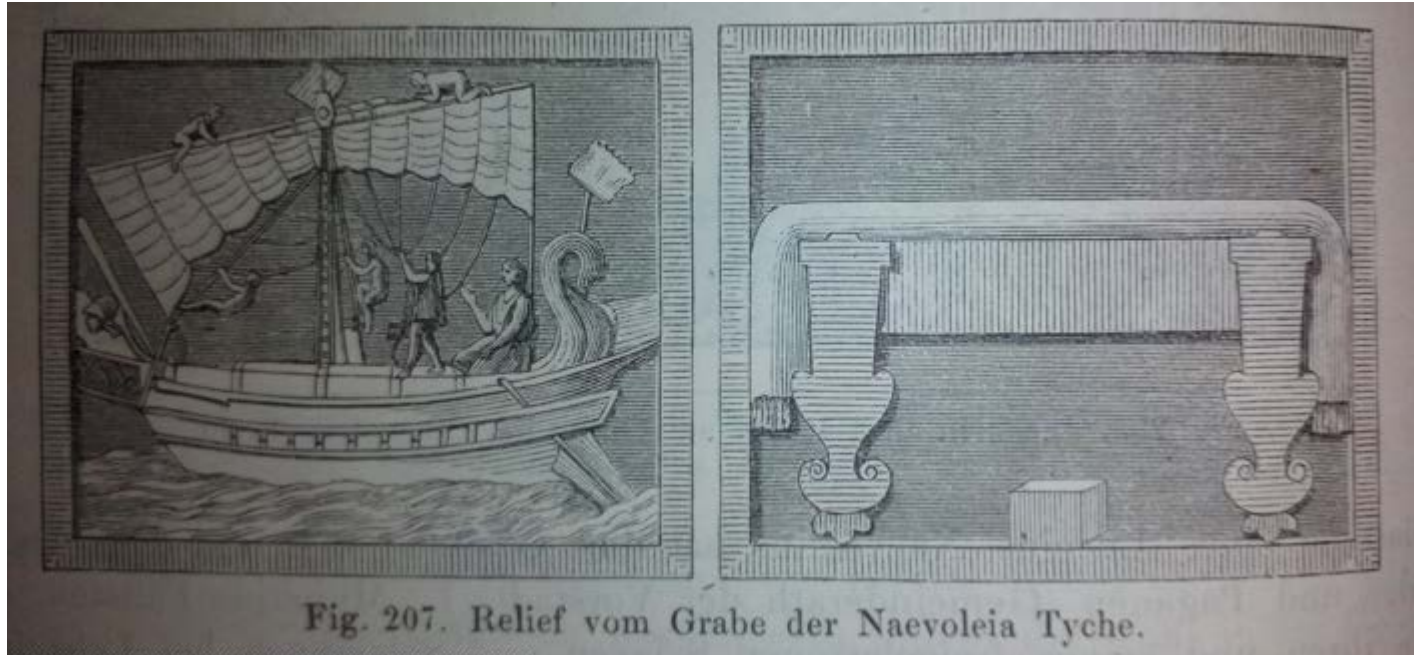


Fig. 205. Inschrift und Relief am Grabe der Naevoleia Tyche.

# Trimalchio: naves etiam <in fronte/latere> monumenti mei facias



# Parallels?

CIL 5.7647: V(ivus) f(ecit) / Q(uintus) Minicius / Faber / **ab asse qu(a)esitum** / V(ir) Aug(ustalis) / re<q=C>uie et memoriae / diuturnae / Lolliae Severae / ux{s}ori Festae f(iliae) / M(arco) filio Salvillo f(ilio) / Messori f(ilio) / Flaviae Priscae ux{s}ori / P(ublius) Minicius Marmuris / <c=Q>uram {h}egit / [i]n fr(onte) p(edes) L in ag(ro) p(edes) L

CIL 9.2029 Vibia L(uci) l(iberta) Chresta mon(umentum) / fecit sibi et suis et C(aio) Rustio / C(ai) l(iberto) Thalasso filio et Vibiae / |(mulieris) l(ibertae) Calybeni libertae Lenae / **ab asse quaesitum lucro suo sine** / fraude aliorum h(oc) m(onumentum) h(eredem) n(on) s(equetur)

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# Peculium: definition 1

D. 15,1,40 pr. (Marcian 5 reg.)  
**Peculium nascitur crescit decrescit moritur**, et ideo eleganter Papirius Fronto dicebat *peculium simile esse homini*. (1) .... ita igitur nascitur *peculium*: **crescit, cum auctum fuerit: decrescit, cum servi vicarii moriuntur, res intercidunt: moritur, cum ademptum sit.**

D. 13,5,20 (Paul. 4 Plaut.)

Nec enim quod **crescit peculium aut decrescit**, pertinet ad constitutoriam actionem.

A *peculium* is born, grows, wastes away, and dies. So it was quite elegant of Papirius Fronto to liken the *peculium* to the slave. ... So this is how the *peculium* is born; it grows by being increased, it wastes away when underslaves die or property gets lost, and it dies when it is taken away.

Petron. 39: *Patrono meo ossa bene quiescant, **qui me hominem inter homines voluit esse.***

Petron. 57: ***Homo inter homines sum***

Petron. 74: Quid enim, inquit (Trimalchio), ambubaia non meminit se? de machina illam sustuli, **hominem inter homines feci.** at inflat se tanquam rana ...

# Peculium: definition 2

D. 15.1.5.3 (Ulpian 29 ed)  
Peculium dictum est quasi  
**pusilla pecunia** sive  
patrimonium pusillum.

A peculium is called so  
because of the picayune  
nature of the money in it.

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D. 50,16,182 (Ulpian 27 ed)

Pater **familias liber "peculium"**  
non potest habere,  
quemadmodum **nec servus**  
**"bona"**.

The head of a household who  
is free cannot have a  
peculium, just as a slave  
cannot have an estate.

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# C. Cassius Longinus

Tac.ann. 14.42: *an, ut quidam fingere non erubescunt, iniurias suas ultus est interfector, **quia de paterna pecunia transegerat aut avitum mancipium detrahebatur?** pronuntiemus ultro dominum iure caesum videri.*

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**Thank you very much for your attention!**

**Contact: [richard.gamauf@univie.ac.at](mailto:richard.gamauf@univie.ac.at)**