AN(OTHER) EPITAPH FOR TRIMALCHIO: *SAT.* 30.2*

I

Trimalchio's fabulous epitaph, recited in full by Petronius' colourful host towards the end of the *Cena* (*Sat*. 71.12), has long attracted abundant comment.[1] Similarly, allusions to the underworld in much of the decoration leading to and in Trimalchio's dining room have been the object of intense scholarly discussion of the freedman's morbid characterization.[2] In consequence, it is now accepted that epitaph and funereal allusions make for a deliberate mirage of the netherworld – so much so that '… Trimalchio's home is in some sense to be regarded as a house of the dead'.[3] As John Bodel has shown, 'Petronius signalled his intention to portray Trimalchio's home as an underworld earlier in the episode'.[4] Examples for this include the procession from the baths to Trimalchio's house that preceded the banquet (*Sat*. 28.4–5) – 'resembling nothing so much as a Roman cortege',[5] and the wall paintings in the *porticus* of Trimalchio's house which made Encolpius stop and pause, as Aeneas had done at the Temple of Apollo at Cumae (*Sat*. 29.1). The example of the pairing of the Cerberus-like watchdog encountered by Encolpius and friends during their escape (*Sat*. 72.7) and the painted dog in Trimalchio's vestibule that frightened Encolpius upon his arrival (*Sat*. 29.1) makes it moreover clear that Petronius engaged in some elaborate ring composition concerning Trimalchio's portrayal as a dead man walking. It is surprising, then, that Petronius should have failed to square the circle as regards Trimalchio's epitaph: *Sat*. 71.12 appears to lack an earlier match – and this despite the fact that a visitor to a Roman tomb might well expect to be informed about the name of the deceased, and perhaps a few other details, at the moment of entering the tomb.

II

A peculiar assemblage at the entrance to Trimalchio's dining room features a triumphal *rostrum*, *fasces*, a lamp – and an inscription (*Sat*. 30.2): *'C. Pompeio Trimalchioni, seviro Augustali, Cinnamus dispensator'* ('To Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio, *sevir* Augustalis. (From) Cinnamus, his *dispensator*').[6] With due reference to a number of

* Thanks to Gavin Kelly and Costas Panayotakis for comments on this and other Trimalchian adventures; and to Michael Crawford for discussion of funerary epigraphy. All mistakes are mine.

[1] For a recent summary of some main contributions (in English) see V. Hope, 'At home with the dead. Roman funeral traditions and Trimalchio's tomb', in J. Prag and I. Repath (edd.), *Petronius: A Handbook* (Oxford, 2009), 140–60. See also n. 9 below.

[2] See especially J. Bodel, 'Trimalchio's underworld', in J. Tatum (ed.), *The Search for the Ancient Novel* (Baltimore and London, 1994), 237–59 (with earlier bibliography), now to be read in conjunction with B. Wesenberg, 'Zur Wanddekoration im Hause des Trimalchio', in L. Castagna and E. Lefèvre (edd.), *Studien zu Petron und seiner Rezeption / Studi su Petronio e sulla sua fortuna* (Berlin and New York, 2007), 267–83, at 270–2; and W. Arrowsmith, 'Luxury and death in the *Satyricon*', *Arion* 5 (1966), 304–31.

[3] Bodel (n. 2), 239.

[4] Ibid. 240.

[5] Ibid. 243.

[6] The precise layout, the location(s) and the rendering of the inscription at the entrance to Trimalchio's dining room are not critical for my argument. For discussion of the text's location see e.g. G. Bagnani, 'The House of Trimalchio', *AJPh* 75 (1954), 16–39, at 29–30, and J.R.W. Prag, '*Cave navem*: Petronius, *Satyricon* 30.1', *CQ* 56 (2006), 538–47, at 539–40. For a suggested layout of the text see Bagnani (this note), 31 (but note his choice of 'VIVIRO' in place of 'SEVIRO').

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real inscriptions from Pompeii, Amedeo Maiuri interpreted the inscription as a dedicatory text.[7] More recently, Jonathan Prag argued for an honorific reading of the text. In so doing, Prag specifically argued against a funerary reading: 'it is in the context of honorific, rather than funerary practice that the inscription set up by Trimalchio's *dispensator* belongs'.[8]

In contrast to Trimalchio's commissioned epitaph,[9] *Sat*. 30.2 lacks any reference to the death of the person concerned – such as the deceased person's presence in the tomb (e.g. *'HIC SITVS EST'*), his or her dead body or parts thereof (e.g. *'OSSA'*), the underworld (e.g. *'DIS MANIBVS'*), the lengths of their lives (e.g. *'VIXIT ANNOS X'*), or even any mention of having set up or paid for the tomb, tombstone or sarcophagus (e.g. *'FECIT'*), let alone the actual tomb or burial space (e.g. *'IN FRONTE PEDES X'*). It lacks moreover the eulogistic element so typical of much funerary epigraphy of the Republican and Imperial age – beyond a brief mention of Trimalchio's position as *sevir Augustalis*. But, in fact, none of these elements need be present in a funerary text. Thus, Gaius Veveius was commemorated by his daughter Veveia precisely without any reference to the death of her father – let alone an exercise in eulogy:[10]

[V]EVEIA C F C VEVEIO
PATREI

If we are given more information than the name of the deceased, this consists often in not much more than the name of the commemorator, as in the case of Veveia, and the relationship between the commemorator and the person to be commemorated, that between daughter and father for Veveia. Beyond commemoration of family relations amongst the free(-born), slaves too were known to act as commemorators for kin, friends and even their superiors, as the following examples remind us:[11]

EVTYCHVS		HIEROCLI
CVBICVLARIVS	OPTATA PASAES	AVG DIS[P]
APHRODISIO FRATRI	OSTIARIA FECERVNT	OPERVM
SVO FECIT	AMICI	PVBLICORVM
VELARIO		EROS VICARIVS

[7] A. Maiuri, *La Cena di Trimalchione di Petronio Arbitro* (Naples, 1945), 157 (and 244). More recent studies have followed this approach without further analysis: see e.g. M.G. Cavalca, *I grecismi nel Satyricon di Petronio* (Bologna, 2001), 64; G.G. Gamba, *Petronio Arbitro e i cristiani. Ipotesi per una lettura contestuale del Satyricon* (Rome, 1998), 143–4; M.S. Smith, *Petronii Arbitri. Cena Trimalchionis* (Oxford, 1975), 62.

[8] Prag (n. 6), 544.

[9] The text of the epitaph at *Sat*. 71.12 makes it clear that the remains of the deceased are in the tomb: *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 best typological discussion of this inscription – i.e. of a fictional example of an 'autobiographical' epitaph – is to my mind still G. Misch, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, 2 vols. (Westport, CT, 1950), 1.208–30, esp. 223–5; for a socio-historical discussion of Trimalchio's commissioned epitaph see J.H. D'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1981), 108–16.

[10] *CIL* I^2.2534 = X.6473 (Setia): 'To Gaius Veveius, her father, [from] Veveia, daughter of Gaius'.

[11] All three inscriptions come from Rome: 1) *CIL* VI.6258: 'Eutychus the *cubicularius* made this for his brother Aphrodisius the *velarius*'; 2) *CIL* VI.6326: 'Optata the doorkeeper, the slave of Pa(n)sa. Her friends made this'; 3) *CIL* VI.8478: 'To Hierocles, the slave of the Emperor, who was *dispensator* of public works. [From] Eros his slave'.

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Moreover, slaves are known to commemorate their masters, as the example of Honoratus, (former) *actor* of (his then deceased master) Blossius demonstrates.[12] Honoratus, of course, is a fairly late example; and whilst it seems to have been rare during the Principate for slaves to commemorate their masters, this none the less occurred both within and outside Italy, as Richard Saller and Brent Shaw demonstrated some twenty-five years ago in their study of epigraphically attested (extended) family relations.[13]

There is no need to add further inscriptions here. What becomes clear from these few examples is Petronius' very careful crafting of a funerary text which, at first sight, could be overlooked as such even by scholars otherwise keen to assert allusions to death and dying in the house of Trimalchio. Yet, the inscription would occasion no surprise in us if found on the Isola Sacra or in a *columbarium* at Rome.

If we moreover replaced our predilection for *reading* Petronius with a preparedness to *see* Trimalchio – or, here, his abode – the clear visual allusion that the assemblage consisting of doorposts, entrance, inscription, etc. makes to real tombs on the *Gräberstrassen* of Roman Italy would be immediately clear, and with this the funerary function of the text.[14]

But Petronius challenges more than just our sense of sight: the choice of name of the commemorating *dispensator*, Cinnamus – the masculine form of *cinnamum*, cinnamon, recalls the spice that was used to sweeten the air during funerals. Like Carpus the carver, whose job was to carve meats, so Cinnamus is a Petronian 'confusion' of name with function, underscoring the sepulchral connotation.[15] The inscription on the doorpost to Trimalchio's dining room makes, then, for a good epitaph.

[12] *CIL* VIII.25817 (Furnos/Africa Proconsularis) = *AE* 1978, 880: *'MEMORIA | BLOSSI HONO| RATVS INGENVS ACTOR | PERFECIT'*. For a recent discussion of this inscription in the context of the study of slavery see L. Schumacher, 'On the status of private *actores*, *dispensatores* and *vilici*', in U. Roth (ed.), *By the Sweat of Your Brow: Roman Slavery in its Socio-Economic Setting* (London, 2010), 31–47, at 43.

[13] R.P. Saller and B.D. Shaw, 'Tombstones and Roman family relations in the Principate: civilians, soldiers and slaves', *JRS* 74 (1984), 124–56, esp. Tables 7, 8, 16, 17, 18 and 32.

[14] For a comparison of Trimalchio's house and various scenes of the *Cena* with real tombs especially at Pompeii see J. Whitehead, 'The "Cena Trimalchionis" and biographical narration', in P.J. Holliday (ed.), *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art* (Cambridge, 1993), 299–325. See also Prag (n. 6), 545–6, who, despite his reading of the inscription as an honorific text, offers a (near) match to the decoration of Trimalchio's abode in the tomb of C. Cartilius Poplicola from the Porta Marina of Ostia, adorned with *fasces, rostrum* and an inscription, and more generally concludes (541) that 'J. Bodel's thesis, that the sequence of elements described prior to the dining room marked out to Petronius' readers the connections with a descent into the underworld, is reinforced: the doorway to the dining room is decorated like the doorway to a tomb'. For Trimalchio's own connection of tomb and house see *Sat*. 71.7. The (inter)play between house and tomb is not unique to the *Satyricon* in Latin literature: see e.g. Stat. *Silv*. 5.1.237.

[15] See *Sat*. 36.5–8 for the pun on the name of the carver Carpus. For an association of cinnamon with funerals in the ancient literary sources see Plin. *HN* 12.83, and Plut. *Sull*. 38; and for a brief modern discussion of the use of cinnamon (and other spices) in funerals see D. Noy, 'Building a Roman funeral pyre', *Antichthon* 34 (2000), 30–45, at 37–8. Naturally, Cinnamus was also the name of actual slaves, without this implying in real life a funerary or funereal connotation, for which see e.g. the epitaph of the *dispensator* Cinnamus from Rome: *CIL* VI.9337. The same applies to Carpus as a slave name, for which see e.g. the epitaph of Carpus (and his brother), the slave of a tax guild, again from Rome: *CIL* VI.8587. The fact that cinnamon was traded over vast distances, bought, sold and resold on the way, may in turn be an allusion to the slave status of Cinnamus: see J.I. Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire, 29 BC–AD 641* (Oxford, 1969), 153–72 for discussion of the 'cinnamon route'.

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III

The identifcation of *Sat*. 30.2 as an epitaph does not exclude other readings of the text. Petronius' choice of grammatical case for Trimalchio's name offers maximum scope for interpretation, which cannot be incidental: Trimalchio's name and title appear in the dative (*C. Pompeio Trimalchioni seviro Augustali*). The use of the dative for the name and title of the deceased is indeed common in funerary epigraphy; the dative is also used in dedicatory inscriptions, and appears moreover in honorary inscriptions (for which one would otherwise expect the use of the accusative): *Sat*. 30.2 *could* be an honorific inscription *or* a dedicatory text *or* an epitaph.[16] There are no good grounds to think that Petronius, having crafted our inscription so as to give it maximum interpretative scope, requires of his modern readers a definite classification.[17] But there *is* good reason to recognize the funerary aspect of the text in question and its interpretative consequences – namely an early identification of Trimalchio's abode as a tomb and Trimalchio as a dead man walking: together with the painted Cerberus' welcome and Encolpius' Aeneas moment briefly mentioned above, the epitaph leaves no doubt as to the nature of the banquet to be consumed and of the characters to be met. Thus, the ring composition of the *Cena*, itself long recognized by modern scholarship, is not just played out on the level of generic allusions to the underworld, but very specifically on that of an individual's death – that of the *princeps libertinorum*.[18]

In sum, the epitaph imagined by the freedman at the end of the dinner party is matched by an(other) epitaph for Trimalchio located at the entrance to his dining room – indicating right from the start that the party's host is 'experiencing a kind of living death'.[19] Whilst Trimalchio's freedman friend Habinnas is directed at the end of what must be the most opulent dinner party of Latin literature 'to prepare his monument "so that by your *beneficium* I may be able to live after death"',[20] Trimalchio's *dispensator* Cinnamus had already provided that service to his freedman master so that he might live on the stage we call the *Cena Trimalchionis*: to every man his own gravestone – *cuique suom cippom* – and to Trimalchio, two.[21]

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[16] The gap between honorific and funerary texts became increasingly smaller under the Principate as a result of 'a growing degree of crossover between honorific and funerary commemoration' in private contexts in the early Empire: Prag (n. 6), 544.

[17] For general discussion of multiple readings and viewpoints in and of the *Satyricon* see N.W. Slater, *Reading Petronius* (Baltimore and London, 1990), and V. Rimell, *Petronius and the Anatomy of Fiction* (Cambridge, 2002); and for discussion of multiple (mis)readings in a specific analytical niche see P. Habermehl, 'Petrus und Petronius. Ein Seitenblick auf neue christliche Lesarten der *Satyrica*', in Castagna and Lefèvre (n. 2), 33–49.

[18] So labelled by P. Veyne, 'Vie de Trimalcion', in id., *La société romaine* (Paris, 1991), 13–56, at 48 (originally published as 'La vie de Trimalcion', *Annales ESC* 16.2 [1961], 213–47), following an electoral *programma* from Pompeii: *CIL* IV.117.

[19] E. Courtney, *A Companion to Petronius* (Oxford, 2001), 117.

[20] Saller and Shaw (n. 13), 127.

[21] Borrowed from *CIL* I^2.2660 (Rome): *CVIQ|VE SV[OM] | CIPO*.

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