

Petronius

Petronius *Satyrica* 29-30

[29] "I was gazing at all this, when I nearly fell backwards and broke my leg. For on the left hand as you went in, not far from the porter's office, a great dog on a chain was painted on the wall, and over him was written in block capitals "beware of the dog." My friends laughed at me, but I plucked up courage and went on to examine the whole wall. It had a picture of a slave-market on it, with the persons' names. Trimalchio was there with long hair, holding a Mercury's staff. Minerva had him by the hand and was leading him into Rome. Then the painstaking artist had given a faithful picture of his whole career with explanations: how he had learned to keep accounts, and how at last he had been made steward. At the point where the wall-space gave out, Mercury had taken him by the chin, and was whirling him up to his high official throne. Fortune stood by flowing with her horn of plenty, and the three Fates spinning their golden threads. I also observed a company of runners practising in the gallery under a trainer, and in a corner I saw a large cupboard containing a tiny shrine, wherein were silver house-gods, and a marble image of Venus, and a large golden box, where they told me Trimalchio's first beard was laid up....

[30] I proceeded to ask the house-manager what pictures they had in the hall. "The Iliad and the Odyssey," he said, "and the gladiator's show given by Laenas." I could not take the whole multiplicity in at once....

We now went through to the dining-room. At the entrance the steward sat receiving accounts. I was particularly astonished to see rods and axes fixed on the door posts of the dining-room, and one part of them finished off with a kind of ship's brazen beak, inscribed:

"Presented by Cinna the steward to Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio, priest of the college of Augustus." Under this inscription a double lamp hung from the ceiling, and two calendars were fixed on either doorpost, one having this entry, if I remember right: "Our master C. goes out to supper on December 30th and 31st," the other being painted with the moon in her course, and the likenesses of seven stars. Lucky and unlucky days were marked too with distinctive knobs."

[n: Rods and axes were the symbols of office of lictors, the attendants on Roman magistrates, and the six Sevirs had the right to be attended by lictors.]

[71] "Now tell me, my dear friend: you will erect a monument as I have directed? I beg you earnestly to put up round the feet of my statue my little dog, and some wreaths, and bottles of perfume, and all the fights of Petraites, so that your kindness may bring me a life after death; and I want the monument to have a frontage of one hundred feet and to be two hundred feet in depth. For I should like to have all kinds of fruit growing round my ashes, and plenty of vines. It is quite wrong for a man to decorate his house while he is alive, and not to trouble about the house where he must make a longer stay. So above all things I want added to the inscription, 'This monument does not descend to my heir.' I shall certainly take care to provide in my will against any injury being done to me when I am dead. I am appointing one of the freedmen to be caretaker of the tomb and prevent the common people from running up and defiling it. I beg you to put ships in full sail ... of monument, and me sitting in official robes on my official seat, wearing five gold rings and distributing coin publicly out of a bag; you remember that I gave a free dinner worth two denarii a head. I should like you to make a representation of a dining-room set of couches, if you can arrange it. And represent also the whole people there enjoying themselves. On my right hand put a statue of dear Fortunata holding a dove, and let her be leading a little dog with a waistband on; and my dear little boy, and big jars sealed with gypsum, so that they may not let the wine run out. And have a broken urn carved with a boy weeping over it. And a sundial in the middle, so that anyone who looks at the time will read my name whether he likes it or not. And again, please think carefully whether this inscription seems to you quite appropriate: 'Here lieth Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio, freedman of Maecenas. The degree of Priest of Augustus was conferred upon him in his absence. He might have been attendant on any magistrate in Rome, but refused it. God-fearing, gallant, constant, he grew from very little and left thirty millions. He never listened to a philosopher. Fare thee well, Trimalchio: and thou too, passer-by.'"