

As her name implies, Trimalchio's wife Fortunata is an emblem of the arbitrariness of luck and opportunity: *et modo modo quid fuit?* (*Satyricon* 37.2). Viewed from an elite perspective, the instability of fortune subverts proper class hierarchy by permitting former slaves to amass copious wealth and put it to no other use than the enjoyment of vulgar pleasures. Yet Fortunata is a complex and not entirely ludicrous figure. It is possible that she, like her husband (D'Arms 1981: 97-120), is to some degree representative of an entire class of individuals, former female slaves risen from questionable to semi-respectable status. In this paper I will identify aspects of her characterization that might correspond to realities in the lives of such freedwomen, then discuss their broader relationship to this section of Petronius' novel.

There are obvious methodological difficulties inherent in treating comic fiction as evidence for social history. Details of the text must be weighed scrupulously against parallels from literature and archaeological and inscriptional evidence. In the case of Fortunata, our best *comparanda* are tombstones of freedwomen erected by spouses, which can provide a digest of the attributes of the ideal wife. Because legal capacity to marry and produce legitimate children was obtained only upon manumission, monuments of freed persons emphasize the solidarity of the marital family. Thus inscriptions most frequently commend a wife's *concordia*, *fides*, and *pudicitia*, virtues equally prized by elites. Yet they also place a high value on women's frugality and industry (Treggiari 1991: 243-49), as we might expect in families seeking to better themselves. The notorious inscription of Allia Potestas (*CIL* VI.37965 = *CLE* 1988), though problematic in other respects, is exemplary in this regard: *prima toro delapsa fuit eadem ultima lecto / se tulit ad quietem positus ex ordine rebus* (12-13).

Though impertinent, the famous sketch placed in the mouth of the dinner guest Hermeros (*Sat.* 37) is grudgingly positive in similar ways: Fortunata keeps track of every penny her husband has, and, though shrewish and opinionated, is also sober and astute. Later we see her in action discreetly stopping Trimalchio from making a drunken fool of himself (52.10). His comments on her behind-the-scenes conduct at the dinner are reminiscent of the praise of Allia Potestas above: *'quomodo nosti' inquit 'illam' Trimalchio 'nisi argentum composuerit, nisi reliquias pueris dividerit, aquam in os suum non coniciet'* (67.2). Because she is given these attributes of the model freedman's wife, Trimalchio's tirade against her at the climax of the *Cena* is all the more outrageous - particularly his banishment of her statue from his tomb, which flies in the face of iconographic convention for those of his class (74.8-17). Like the sterility of his marriage, it is an ironic negation of family aspirations that motivated the status-seeking attempts of actual freedmen.

Finally, I will discuss how the assignment of such ideal traits to Fortunata bears on the themes and class tensions of the *Cena*.