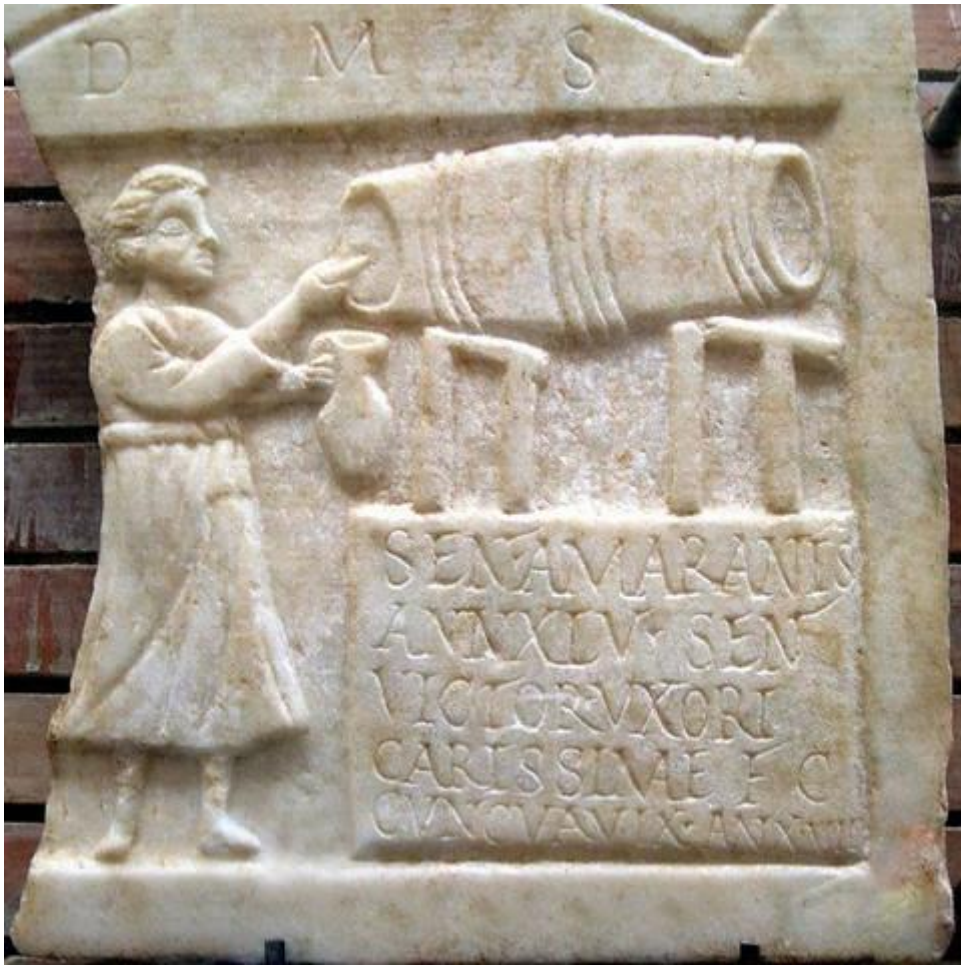


BELLARIA LXXX



WOMEN'S LIVES FROM ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS

By kind permission of Cambridge University Press, this series is based entirely on Emily A. Hemelrijk's superb *Women and Society in the Roman World: A Sourcebook of Inscription from the Roman West* (Cambridge 2021).

The Latin of many inscriptions

would often get 0/10 from *Kennedy's Latin Primer*. So too would some of the verses. For some basic information about naming female slaves and freedwomen, see *Bellaria* 79.

II CITIZENSHIP AND ETHNICITY

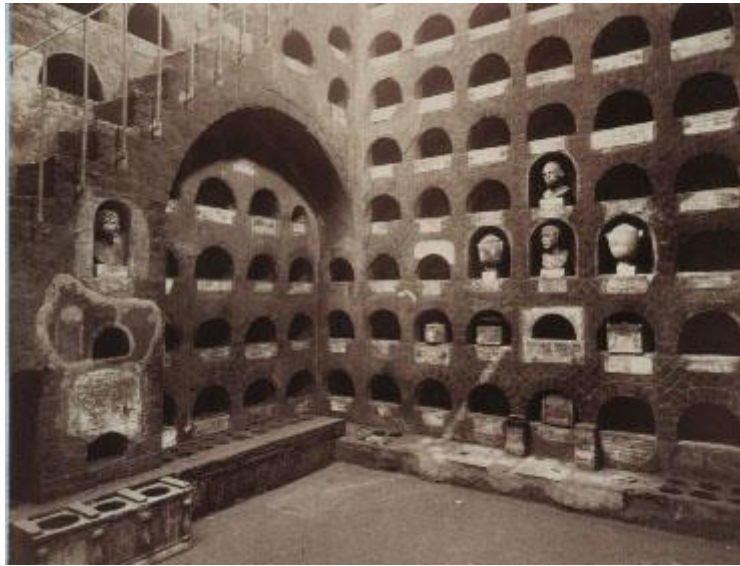
Slaves and Freedmen

Comment: this section concentrates on females slaves (mostly brought in from the Greek East), freedwomen and women of non-Roman background. Many in the last two categories signal on their epitaphs both their ethnic identity and their Romanitas. Their ability to set up expensive monuments suggests these women had gone some way to fulfilling their social aspirations.

1-6 Workers from the business run by the Statilii family

Rome, from the *columbarium* (sepulchre with niches for burial urns) of the *Statilii* family.

Early 1st century AD



Columbarium of the Statilii

1 Slaves from the spinning department

CIL 6, 6339 and 6341

a) Acte, spinning woman.

Acte, quasillaria.

Hedone, spinning woman, lived thirty years.

b) *Hedone, quasillaria, uixit annos XXX.*

2 A weaver

CIL 6, 6362

Bones of Italia, weaver [more prestigious than spinning].

ossa Italiae, textricis.

3 A seamstress

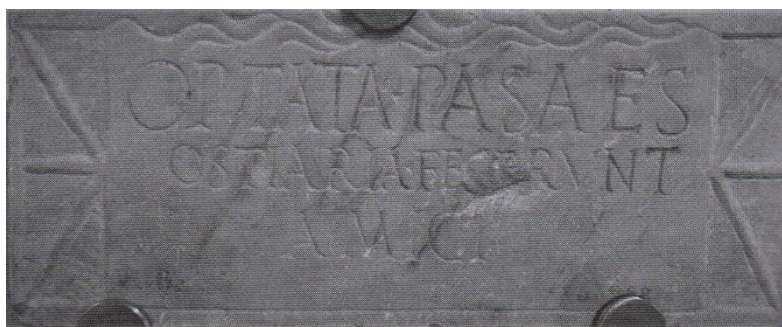
CIL 6, 6349

Daphne, seamstress.

Daphne, sarcinatrix.

4 A female doorkeeper

CIL 6, 6326



Funerary plaque for Optata

Optata, slave/sub-slave* of Pansa, doorkeeper. Her friends made this.

Optata, Pansaes serua uicaria, ostiaria. fecerunt amici.

*Pansa was probably a slave, making Opatata a sub-slave.

5 A midwife

CIL 6, 6325

Secunda, midwife of Statilia Maior.

Secunda, ostetrix Statiliae Maioris.

6 A pedagogue (child-minder)

CIL 6, 6331

Comment: it was common for freed slaves to continue to serve their old masters

Statilia Tyrannis, freedwoman of Titus, pedagogue of Statilia.

Statilia, Titi liberta, Tyrannis, paedagoga Statiliaes (!).

7-10 Workers from other households

Rome, 1st and 2nd C AD

7 A foot-servant

CIL 6, 9781

Rufa, foot-servant [i.e. accompanies her mistress when out in public], lies here.

Rufa, pedisequa, hic sita est.

8 A hair-dresser and mirror-holder

CIL 6, 7297



Sacred to the spirits of the dead. Panope, hairdresser of Torquata, wife of Quintus Volusius, lived 22 years and Phoebe, mirror-holder, lived 37 years. Spendo made this for his [above two] well-deserving partners and himself. The place was given by decurial decree [i.e. of the councillors of the private family *collegia* of slaves and freedmen].

Dis Manibus sacrum. Panope, ornatrice Torquatae Quinti Volusi, uixit annis XXII et Phoebe, a speculum, uixit annis XXXVII. Spendo contubernaliibus suis bene merentibus fecit et sibi. locus datus decreto decurionum.

9 A wool-weigher

CIL 6, 9498

To the spirits of the dead. To Julia Soteris, wool-weigher. Lived 80 years. Marcus Julius Primus, Julia Musa, Julia Thisbe, Julia Ampliata, Julia Romana [probably the freed staff in this elite household] made it.

Dis Manibus. Iuliae Soteridi, lanipendae. uixit annos LXXX. fecerunt Marcus Iulius Primus, Iulia Musa, Iulia Thisbe, Iulia Ampliata, Iulia Romana.

10 A masseuse

CIL 6, 37823

Aethis [slave] of Caesia Prisca, masseuse/beautician

Aethidis, Caesiae Priscae, tractatricis.

Relationships with masters

Comment: slaves could not marry but they could cohabit and have children, who were called uernae i.e. home-born slaves (some may have been fathered by the master of the house). A number of epitaphs record slaves who were freed in order to marry their masters. Because freed slaves became Roman citizens and carried the name of their masters, they were often buried in the family tomb and required to help maintain it and its rituals.

13 Vernae exploited as prostitutes

CIL 4, 4023 and 4025

Graffiti on bakery entrance in Pompeii, Italy.

Before AD 79

(a) Felicula, home-born slave, for 2 asses [very cheap]

(a) *Felicula, uerna, assibus II.*

(b) Successa, home-born slave, well-mannered, for ? two asses

(b) *Successa, uerna, bellis moribus, assibus.*

18 Sorrow for the death of a favoured slave-girl (*delicium*)

CIL 6, 36525

Rome

100-50 BC

Here is buried a maiden with outstanding habits ... who was among the delights of Vettia [possibly the wife of Verres!] and who also pleased her master. They loved her and after her death filled her tomb with lamentation and last rites. They themselves bewailed that the life of a slave girl was taken from them who was one of their delights and appropriate [. . .].

hic est sepulta uirgo egregiis moribus ..., quae in deliciais fuerat Vettiae, quae domino placuit: eam morte obita diligunt monumentumque eius fletu ac muneribus replent, seque ipsei deflent, uitam esse ereptam sibi seruae suis deliciais uitam aptae ...

20 A *delicium* dying in childbirth

CIL 14, 2737

Tusculum, Italy

1st century AD 25

For Rhanis, freedwoman of Sulpicia, our delight. [In verse] Born only a short time ago and not earlier exposed to childbirth, Rhanis by her tomb testifies to her sad fate. For she had not yet completed twice eight years, when she was carried off from life, snatched away during childbirth. This tomb of a parent holds two burials in one body, now one heap of ashes contains a double burial. [In prose] Sulpicia Rhanis, freedwoman of [Sulpicia] Trio.

Rhanidi, Sulpiciae libertae, delicio. [In verse] *nata breui spatium, partu subiecta nec ante / testator busto tristia fata Rhanis. / namque bis octonos nondum compleuerat annos / et rapta est uitae, rapta puerperio. / parentis tumulus duo funera corpore in uno, / exequias geminas nunc cinis unus habet. Sulpicia, Trionis liberta, Rhanis.*

30 Mussia Callityche

CIL 6, 22765

Rome

AD 50-100

Comment: Lucius was probably a freed slave who then freed his slave Callityche and married her.

Lucius Mussius Trophimus [set this up] for Callityche his freedwoman and excellent wife—most dear for her merits, with whom he lived for 42 years: she lived for 52 years—and for himself.

Lucius Mussius Trophimus Callityche, libertae et coniugi suae optimae, et meritis suis karissimae, cum qua uixit annis XXXXII, tulit annos LII, et sibi.

Relationships and achievements of freedwomen

Comment: it was perfectly respectable for freed couples who chose not to marry to live together informally in the relationship known as contubernium (con + taberna + ium: lit. 'sharing a tent; cohabitation'). Freedwomen who had developed useful skills and abilities as slaves could make very good in their new lives.

42 A wife and a concubine

CIL 1, 2527a

Rome

100-70 BC

Comment: Publius and Quinctia were freed and married; when she died, Publius freed Quinctia Agate and lived with her.

Publius Quinctius, freedman of Titus, copyist/scribe/secretary. Quinctia, freedwoman of Titus, his wife. Quinctia Agate, freedwoman of Publius, his freedwoman and concubine. This tomb does not pass to heirs.*

* i.e. heirs *outside* the family, who would have no interest in maintaining the family name.

Publius Quinctius, Titi libertus, librarius. Quinctia, Titi liberta, uxor. Quinctia, Publi liberta, Agate, liberta concubina. sepulcrum heredes ne sequitur.

47 Marital ideals: dialogue of a freed couple

CIL 6, 12652

Rome

AD 41

[Front] Atimetus Anterotianus, freedman of Pamphilus, freedman of Tiberius Caesar Augustus, set this up for himself and for Claudia Homonoëa, his fellow freedwoman and partner.

Atimetus, Pamphili Tiberi Caesaris Augusti liberti libertus, Anterotianus sibi et Claudiae Homonoëae conlibertae et contubernali.

[Homonoëa, speaking in Greek verse]

Much sweeter-voiced than the Sirens and at drinking-parties and feasts more golden than Kupris [i.e. Aphrodite] herself, I, Homonoëa, chatty and cheerful swallow, lie here leaving tears to Atimetus, 5 to whom I was pleasing from my early youth onwards, but an unforeseen demon scattered this great love of ours.

Ἡ πολὺ Σειρήνων λιγυρωτέρη, ἢ παρὰ Βάκχῳ / καὶ θοίναις αὐτῆς χρυσοτέρη
Κύπριδος, / ἢ λαλίη φαιδρὴ τε χελειδονὶς ἔνθ' Ὀμόνοια / κεῖμαι, Ἀτιμήτῳ
λειπομένη δάκρυα, / 5 τῷ πέλον ἄσπασίη βαιῆς ἄπο· τὴν δὲ τοσαύτην /
δαίμων ἀπροϊδῆς ἐσκέδασεν φιλίην.

[Below, in Latin] By permission of the patron. [Dimensions of the tomb] 5 feet wide, 4 feet deep.*

* the tomb and its surrounding plot of land were sacred

Permissu patroni: in fronte longum pedes V, latum pedes IV

[Left, Homonoëa speaking to the passer-by]

You who pass by with untroubled mind, briefly halt your step, I beg you, and read a few words*. [In verse] I, the very Homonoëa who was preferred over illustrious girls, am buried in this small tomb. To me the Paphian [i.e. Venus] gave beauty, the Charites grace and Pallas [Athena] instructed me in all arts. My span of life had not yet seen twice ten years when the jealous Fates laid hands on me. It is not for myself that I complain: the grief of Atimetus, my husband, is more sorrowful to me than death itself.

* Since reading aloud was usual in the ancient world, such invitations kept the name 'alive' and the 'conversation' between the honorands would be 're-enacted' by passersby, a charming conceit.
*tu qui segura procedis mente, parumper siste gradum, quaeso, uerbaque pauca
lege: illa ego, quae claris fueram praelata puellis, / hoc Homonoëa breui condita
sum tumulo, / cui formam Paphie, Charites tribuere decorem, / quam Pallas cunctis
artibus erudiit. / nondum bis denos aetas mea uiderat annos, / iniecere manus
inuida fata mihi. / nec pro me queror hoc, morte est mihi tristior ipsa / maeror
Atimeti, coniugis ille mei.*

[Passer-by speaking, in verse]

May the earth rest lightly upon you, woman most worthy in life, you who once enjoyed your possessions.

Sit tibi terra leuis, mulier dignissima uita, / quaeque tuis olim perfruerere bonis.

[Right, Atimetus speaking, in verse]

If the cruel Fates would permit the weighing of souls and if survival could be bought by another's death, I would willingly have exchanged the time of my life for you, my dear Homonoëa, however little is due to me. But now, as much as I can, I will shun the light of life and the gods in order to follow you over the Styx in a speedy death.

*si pensare animas sinerent crudelia fata / et posset redimi morte aliena salus, /
quantulacumque meae debentur tempora uitae, / pensassem pro te, cara
Homonoëa, libens. / at nunc quod possum, fugiam lucemque deosque, / ut te
matura per Styga morte sequar.*

[Homonoëa speaking, in verse]

Do not batter your youth by crying, husband, or disturb my fate by mourning. Tears are of no use nor can the Fates be moved. We have lived; this end is the same for everyone. Spare yourself so as never to experience a similar sorrow and may all divine powers favour your prayers. And may whatever my premature death has snatched away from my youth prolong your life, so that you will live longer.

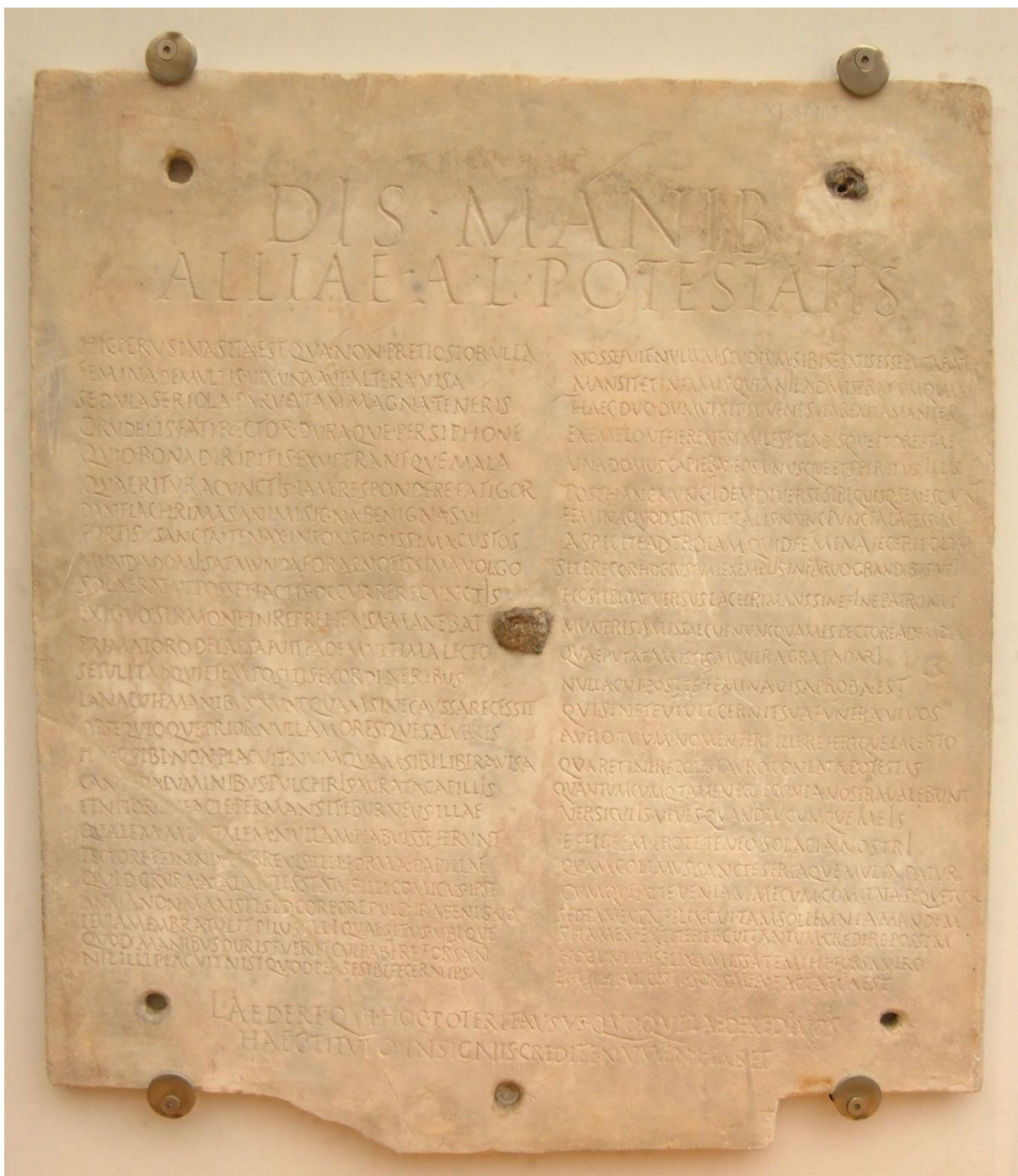
*parce tuam, coniux, fletu quassare iuuentam / fataque maerendo sollicitare mea: /
nihil prosunt lacrimae nec possunt fata moueri. / uiximus, hic omnis exitus unus
habet. / parce, ita non unquam similem experiare dolorem / et faueant uotis
numina cuncta tuis, / quodque mihi eripuit mors immatura iuuentae, / id tibi
uicturo proroget ulterius.*

53 Allia Potestas, a freedwoman living together with two men

CIL 6, 37965

Rome

2nd century AD?



Comment: here praised in unusually erotic detail while exhibiting all the traditional wifely virtues, Allia who lived with two lovers, is likened to a heroine from epic.

[In large letters on top] To the spirits of the dead of Allia Potestas, freedwoman of Aulus

Dis Manibus Alliae, Auli libertae, Potestatis.

[Left hand column] Here lies a woman from Perugia, who was the most precious of all. One could hardly find any other woman who was as industrious. In this small jar you are now held, great though you were. 'Cruel master of Fate and pitiless Persephone, why do you deprive us of good things and why does evil prevail?' This is asked by all; I am already weary of answering. They offer tears, kind signs of their feeling. She was firm, venerable, steadfast, blameless, a most trustworthy guardian, elegant at home and elegant enough outdoors, very well known to the populace. She was the only one who could cope with all occurrences. Sparing in her speech,

she remained without blame. She was first to get out of bed and the last to go to bed after she had put everything in its place. Her wool work never left her hands without good reason. No woman surpassed her in obedience and her morals were sound.

hic Perusina sita est, qua non pretiosior ulla femina, de multis uix una aut altera uisa sedula. Seriola parua tam magna teneris. 'crudelis fati rector duraque Persphone, quid bona diripitis exsuperantque mala?' quaeritur a cunctis; iam respondere fatigor. dant lacrimas animi signa benigna sui. fortis, sancta, tenax, insons, fidissima custos, munda domi, sat munda foras, notissima uolgo. sola erat, ut posset factis occurrere cunctis. exiguo sermone inreprehensa manebat. prima toro delapsa fuit, eadem ultima lecto se tulit ad quietem positis ex ordine rebus, lana cui e minibus nuncquam(!) sine causa recessit, obsequioque prior nulla moresque salubres.

She was not self-satisfied and never considered herself a freedwoman. She was white-skinned with beautiful eyes and golden hair and there was always an ivory lustre on her face—they say that no mortal ever had such a face—and on her snow-white breast the shape of her nipple was delicate. What about her legs? The appearance of Atalanta was comic compared to her. Restless, she did not stand still, but beautiful in her bounteous body she kept her limbs smooth, having sought out every hair. Perhaps you would find fault with her for her rough hands: nothing pleased her unless she herself had done it for herself.

Haec sibi non placuit, numquam sibi libera uisa. candida, luminibus pulchris, aurata capillis, et nitor in facie permansit eburneus illae, qualem mortalem nullam habuisse ferunt; pectore et in niueo breuis illi forma papillae. quid crura? Atalantes status illi comicus ipse. anxia non mansit, sed corpore pulchra benigno leuia membra tulit, pilus illi quaesitus ubique. quod manibus duris fuerit, culpabere forsan: nihil illi placuit, nisi quod per se sibi fecerat ipsa.

[Right hand column] She had no eagerness to know (others?); she considered herself sufficient to herself. She remained without (?) bad reputation, because she had never committed any wrong. During her life, she guided her two young lovers in such a way that they became like the example of Pylades and Orestes. One house held them both together and they were of one spirit. Now, after her death, they grow old separately, each by himself. What such a woman built up, a short period of time now spoils. Look at Troy, what a woman once did! Let it be justified, I pray, to use such grand examples for a small matter. These verses your Patron, who weeps without end, offers as a last service to you whom he has lost, but who is never out of his heart. To be offered those gifts, he believes, is agreeable to those who are lost.

nosse fuit nullum studium, sibi se satis esse putabat. mansit et infamis, quia nihil admiserat umquam. haec duo, dum uixit, iuuenes ita rexit amantes, exemplo ut fierent similes Pyladisque et Orestae: una domus capiebat eos unusque et spiritus illis. post hanc nunc idem diuersi sibi quisque senescunt. femina quod struxit talis nunc puncta lacescunt. aspiciate ad Troiam, quid femina fecerit olim! sit precor hoc iustum exemplis in paruo grandibus uti. hos tibi dat uersus lacrimans sine fine patronus muneris amissae, cui nuncquam(!) es pectore adempta, quae putat amissis munera gratia dari.

After you, no woman seemed good to him; he who lives without you sees his own funeral while alive. In gold, he carries your name back and forth on his arm by which Potestas, held in gold, can keep hold of (him). Yet so much power as our praises will have, so long you will live on in my little verses. In your place, I keep as a consolation your image, which we solemnly worship and to which many wreaths of flower are given. And whenever I shall come to you, the image will follow in my train. But, unhappy me, to whom can I entrust so solemn a duty? If there is someone to whom I can consign such a task I shall perhaps be happy for this sole reason, though having lost you. Woe is me! You have won; my fate is your doing.

[Below] Whoever will be able to violate this tomb, also dared to trespass against the gods. Believe me: she who is distinguished by this inscription has divine power.

nulla cui post te femina uisa proba est; qui sine te uiuit, cernit sua funera uius. auro tuum nomen fert ille refertque lacerto, qua retinere potest: auro conlata Potestas. quantumque tamen praeconia nostra ualebunt, uersiculis uiues quandiucumque(!) meis. effigiem pro te teneo solacia nostri, quam colimus sancte sartaque multa datur, cumque at te ueniam, mecum comitata sequetur. sed tamen infelix cui tam sollemnia mandem? si tamen extiterit, cui tantum credere possim, hoc unum felix amissa te mihi forsitan ero. ei mihi, uicisti: sors mea facta tua est. laedere qui hoc poterit ausus quoque laedere diuos: haec titulo insignis, credite, numen habet

Citizenship and ethnicity

64 Menimane and Blussus

CIL 13, 7067

Mogontiacum, Germania superior

AD 14-54

Comment: the couple are wearing local (i.e. non-Roman) dress. Note the dog on Menimane's lap, and the money bag in Blussus' hand (the cargo ship on the back of the monument shows he was a maritime trader). They were not Roman citizens, but have a Roman-style monument in Latin and a son with a Latin name.

Blussus, son of Atusirus, sailor, aged 75, lies here. Menimane, daughter of Brigio, aged [], his wife, made this while alive [also] for herself. Satto, home-born slave, aged [] lies here. Primus, their son, set this up for his parents in return for their dutifulness.

Blussus, Atusiri filius, nauta, annorum LXXV, hic situs est. Menimane, Brigionis filia, annorum [], uxor uiua sibi fecit. Satto, uerna, annorum [], hic situs est. Primus filius parentibus pro pietate posuit.



Menimane, Blussus and Primus (?) between them

Citizenship and ethnicity

73 Ethnic designations and Roman citizenship

*CIL*16

Brigetio, Pannonia superior (Pannnia was an area to the north-east of Italy, bounded by the Danube in the north and east).

12 January AD 105

Comment: this passage derives from a bronze military diploma discharging the soldier Lucco—son of Trenus, of the British Dobunni tribe—and granting his whole family Roman citizenship. Lucco probably met his wife in Pannonia. Presumably they remained in Pannonia, since the diploma was found there.

[Only part has been translated]

[The emperor Trajan] to those whose names are written below has granted citizenship for themselves and their children and descendants and the right of legal marriage with the wives they had when citizenship was granted to them, or, if any were unmarried, with those they would later marry, on the condition that each man marries only one woman. On the day before the Ides of January [12 January], when Tiberius Julius Candidus Marius Celsus and Gaius Antius Iulius Quadratus were consuls, both for the second time. Infantry-men of the *cohors I Britannica miliaria*

ciuium Romanorum commanded by Quintus Caecilius Redditus. For Lucco, son of Trenus, of the Dobunni and Tutula, daughter of Breucus, his wife, of the Azali, and Similis, his son, and Lucca, his daughter, and Pacata, his daughter. This is copied and checked from the bronze tablet set up at Rome.

quorum nomina subscripta sunt ipsis liberis posterisque eorum ciuitatem dedit et conubium cum uxoribus, quas tunc habuissent, cum est ciuitas iis data, aut, si qui caelibes essent, cum iis quas postea duxissent, dumtaxat singuli singulas. Pridie Idus Ianurias Tiberio Iulio Candido Mario Celso II, Caio Antio Iulio Quadrato II consulibus, cohortis I Britannicae miliariae ciuium Romanorum, cui praeest Quintus Caecilius Redditus, pediti. Lucconi, Treni filio, Dobunno et Tutulae, Breuci filiae, uxori eius, Azalae, et Simili, filio eius, et Luccae, filiae eius, et Pacatae, filiae eius. descriptum et recognitum ex tabula aenea, quae fixa est Romae.

79 Of provincial descent

CIL 13, 1880 = CBI 34

Lugdunum, Gallia Lugdunensis.

Late 2nd-early 3rd century AD

Comment: Pontia was a slave of Gallic birth, and Marcus freed and married her. As a beneficiarius, he was soldier on special assignment under the provincial procurator. The nicknames may indicate they were Christians.

To the Spirits of the Dead and eternal memory of Pontia Martina, provincial by birth, who lived forty years, two months and five days. Marcus Pontius Gemellus, veteran of the *Legio I Mineruiae Pia Fidelis*, honourably discharged with the rank of *beneficiarius* of the procurator, set this up for Pontia Martina, his freedwoman and dearest wife, a most venerable and incomparable woman, who lived with him for 22 years, 2 months and 5 days, without any hurt feelings. Marcus Pontius Gemellus commissioned this during his lifetime for himself and his descendants and dedicated it under the axe.* Farewell Dulcitus, Gaudentius greets you.** Good wishes for good people.

* Probably indicating the tomb was under divine protection

**both nicknames: *Dulcitus* 'Sweetie', *Gaudentius* 'Joyful'

Dis Manibus et memoriae aeternae Pontiae Martinae, natione prouincialis, quae uixit annis XXXX, mensibus II, diebus V. Marcus Pontius Gemellus, ueteranus legionis I Mineruiae Piae Fidelis, missus honesta missione ex beneficiario procuratoris, Pontiae Martinae, libertae et coniugi karissimae, feminae sanctissimae et incomparabili, quae uixit cum eo annis XXII, mensibus II, diebus V, sine ulla animi laesione. Marcus Pontius Gemellus uiuus sibi posterisque suis faciendum curauit et sub ascia dedicauit. aue Dulciti, Gaudentius te salutat. bonis bene.

Next week: Occupations