

## TRIMALCHIO'S COMING OF AGE

JOHN BODEL

*tam magnus ex Asia veni quam hic candelabrus est. ad summam, quotidie me solebam ad illum metiri, et ut celerius rostrum barbatum haberem, labra de lucerna ungebam. tamen ad delicias [femina] ipsimi [domini] annos quattuordecim fui. nec turpe est quod dominus iubet. ego tamen et ipsimae [dominae] satis faciebam. scitis quid dicam: taceo, quia non sum de gloriosis.* (Petr. Sat. 75.10–11)

RECENTLY M. D. REEVE HAS ARGUED that when Trimalchio says *annos quattuordecim fui* he means "at fourteen"; for the accusative *annos* he cites *Anth. Lat.* 15 SB (= 28 Riese), line 3 *annos ludere te decem decebit* with Shackleton Bailey's note *ad loc.* ("i.e. decem annos natum") and shows that in Petronius' day duration was normally expressed with the ablative case.<sup>1</sup> T. Wade Richardson, finding the linguistic evidence inconclusive, defends the conventional interpretation "for fourteen years" on the grounds that context and setting demand it.<sup>2</sup> As my colleague, Professor Shackleton Bailey, notes, Horace *Carm.* 4.1.6 *circa lustra decem* adds weight to Reeve's argument, but Richardson rightly objects to the resulting meaning in Petronius, "at fourteen," since it seems to imply that Trimalchio's service *ad delicias* lasted only a year. When grammar and sense are in conflict, often the text is at fault, and here the glosses *femina* and *domini* betray the interpolator's hand. When and for how long did Trimalchio play master's pet?

Richardson suggests that "Trimalchio's service could have extended from the age of seven, say, . . . to twenty-one," but it is perhaps worth noting that the oldest male *delicium* whose age we know died at eighteen.<sup>3</sup> More to the point, on Richardson's interpretation the number fourteen seems

<sup>1</sup>M. D. Reeve, "A Change in Trimalchio's Life," *Phoenix* 39 (1985) 378–379.

<sup>2</sup>T. Wade Richardson, "Further on the Young Trimalchio," *Phoenix* 40 (1986) 201.

<sup>3</sup>*CIL* VI 17149. With one (apparently aberrant) exception (*AE* [1957] 217 *vix(it) ann(is) L*; cf. *Sen. Ep.* 12.3), the oldest known *delicatus* likewise died at 18: *CIL* V 3825. Female *delicia* and *delicatae* are sometimes found at older ages: *CIL* V 3474 (26 years), VI 15570 [= 34095] (23), *AE* (1984) 91 (20); further, A. Mau, "Deliciae," *RE* 4.2 (1901) 2436–2437. Establishing a *terminus a quo* for being an ἐρώμενος is more difficult: Strato (*Anth. Pal.* 12.228.1–2) suggests that respectable pederasts refrained from seducing very young boys (ἄφρονες), but the notorious depravities of the emperor Tiberius, allegedly involving *pueri primae teneritudinis* and even *infantes necdum lacte depulsi*, remind us that a shameless master's indulgences were limited only by his appetites (*Suet. Tib.* 44.1).

inept, neither plausibly typical nor comically absurd, whereas Trimalchio's biography otherwise shows every sign of having been carefully crafted.<sup>4</sup> Reeve's observation that Macrobius mentions *iura publica* setting the age of puberty in boys at fourteen (*Sat.* 7.7.6), is not, then, beside the point (*pace* Richardson), since it provides a plausible explanation for Petronius' choice of number. Nor is Macrobius our only authority for the widespread ancient view that boyhood ended, biologically as well as juridically, at the end of the fourteenth year.<sup>5</sup>

Trimalchio's reasons for wishing to grow a beard are generally recognized: whiskers (and body hair) heralded the passing of youth and the loss of a young boy's appeal.<sup>6</sup> Less obvious, perhaps, is the specious credibility of Trimalchio's cosmetic technique, although Reinesius long ago adduced the medical writers Aëtius and Alexander of Tralles as witnesses to the popular belief that topical application of lamp oil could preternaturally stimulate the growth of hair.<sup>7</sup> Whether or not Petronius' readers believed such quackery is irrelevant; Trimalchio's intention, clearly, was to hasten the course of nature. What one expects after *celerius* (sc. *solito*) . . . *tamen*, then, is not the age at which he played Ganymede but the age at which he stopped, a watershed that normally coincided with the advent of puberty. True, beard growth did not always commence precisely at fourteen, and the ancients knew as much, but no other age was so widely associated with the physiological changes accompanying adolescence, and no other age would have been so readily taken as a sign that the flower had begun to fade.<sup>8</sup> Verisimilitude is served if Trimalchio retained his bloom until the age of

<sup>4</sup>Cf. P. Veyne, "Vie de Trimalcion," *Annales ESC* 16 (1961) 213–247, especially 218–219; J. H. D'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981) 97–120; and, on the present passage, J. Bodel, "Trimalchio and the Candelabrum," *CP* 84 (1989) forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup>Cf., e.g., Arist. *HA* 5.14.544b26; Philo *Op. Mundi* 103–104; Galen 17 (2) 637.8–9, 792.12–13 Kühn; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 6.814; Isid. *Orig.* 11.2.3, 13; further, W. Suder, "On Age Classification in Roman Imperial Literature," *CB* 55 (1978) 5–9.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. S. L. Taran, "ΕΙΣΙ ΤΡΙΧΕΙΣ: An Erotic Motif in the Greek Anthology," *JHS* 105 (1985) 90–107; R. J. Durling, "Arresting Puberty," *RhM NF* 129 (1986) 364; N. M. Kay, *Martial Book XI. A Commentary* (Oxford 1985) 118–121 (on 11.22).

<sup>7</sup>Aët. 1.100, Alex. Trall. *Febr.* 1.2; Reinesius' comments are now most accessible in Burman's two editions (Utrecht 1709 and Amsterdam 1743), *ad loc.*

<sup>8</sup>Strato once implied that a youth remained in his prime until age seventeen (*Anth. Pal.* 12.4), and there is scattered evidence that boys as old as eighteen were considered suitable ἐπόμενοι (*Anth. Pal.* 12.125 [Meleager]; Lucian *Ver. Hist.* 2.28, *Alex.* 41; cf. F. Buffière, *Eros adolescent* [Paris 1980] 609–611); but most authorities attributed the onset of puberty to the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth years: cf. E. Eyben, "Antiquity's View of Puberty," *Latomus* 31 (1972) 677–697, especially 691–693, 695–696. For other examples of numerical realism in Petronius, cf. 45.10 and 71.9 (municipal *epula* at HS 8 per head), 44.14 (HS 100,000, a common census qualification for the decurionate) with R. Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire. Quantitative Studies*<sup>2</sup> (Cambridge 1982) 242–243.

fourteen, and no longer. But I doubt whether the transmitted text can yield that sense.

The simplest solution is to suppose that *ad* has fallen out after *ipsimi*, perhaps a victim of the intrusive *domini*, perhaps as a result of a copyist's eye faltering at the second of two *ad* constructions in close proximity.<sup>9</sup> In either case, *ad* (or *usque ad*) *annos tot* was a perfectly natural way for Trimalchio to say "up to age X."<sup>10</sup> Point is restored to the numeral and regularity to the syntax if we read *tamen ad delicias ipsimi <ad> annos quattuordecim fui*: Trimalchio claims to have gratified his master's libido until he reached the conventional age of puberty, fourteen, despite his efforts to promote premature growth of a beard.<sup>11</sup>

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLASSICS  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS. 02138

<sup>9</sup>Similar scribal errors of omission have been detected elsewhere in the *Cena* at 42.4 *minoris quam muscae sumus, <muscae> tamen aliquam virtutem habent* . . . and 50.6 . . . *et fecerunt catilla et paropsides <et> statuncula* (cf. 58.7 *Athana tibi irata sit, curabo, et <ei> qui te primus "deuro de" fecit*). A contributing factor at 75.11 may have been the unfamiliar idiom *ad delicias*, which has been misunderstood in modern times (e.g., by C. Pellegrino, *Petronii Arbitri "Satyricon"* [Rome 1975] 361 [*ad* = *velut*]); for the correct interpretation (*ad* + acc. for final dative), see H. Petersmann, *Petrone urbane Prosa* (Vienna 1977) 80; cf. Cic. *Parad.* 10 *cogitationem . . . suppellectilis ad delicias*; further, *TLL* V 447.51–52, 56.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 1.1.18 *cur hoc . . . usque ad septem annos lucrum fastidiamus?*; *CIL* VI 26119 *ad anos* (sic) *vixit xxviii*; Gran. Lic. 14b Bonn. *ille se et puerulum Romam venisse et aetate maiorem esse ad annos xxiii praedicaret*, with the comment of G. Camozzi in his edition (Pavia 1900) 20, *ad loc.*: "i.e. quattuor et viginti annos natum": the explanation holds for all three passages, as also for those involving numerical adjectives (Pliny *HN* 8.116 *usque ad sexennes*; *CIL* VIII 8896 [= *CLE* 1283] *haec ter tricenos postquam pervenit ad annos*) and for Livy 26.25.11 *ab quindecim ad sexaginta annos*, which has a slightly different sense, "(men) between the ages of fifteen and sixty." The basic construction is attested already in Varro *Rust.* 2.1.20 *fere ad quattuor menses a mamma non diiunguntur agni. fui* is ingressive; cf. 43.1 *molestus fuit*; Petersmann (above, n. 9) 178–179.

<sup>11</sup>For helpful comments I am grateful to Professors E. Badian, D. R. Shackleton Bailey, and Hayden Pelliccia, and to a *Phoenix* referee.