

hospitium hospites capit

The suggestion of Dr. Andreas Thierfelder (*Rhein. Mus.* N. F. 95, p. 192) that in Petronius 77.4 *hospitium* is genitive plural (cf. Neue-Wagener, *Formenlehre*³, I, p. 413) and that the words *hospitium hospites capit* therefore mean (*domus*) *capit permultos hospites*, though attractive at first sight, appears on closer examination to be no better suited to the context than the emendations of Reinesius and Burmann or the interpretations of Buecheler, Friedlaender, and Ernout of which he disapproves. Trimalchio is describing the many architectural features of his house; he enumerates the *cenationes* (or *cellationes*), the bedrooms, marbled porticoes, his own bedroom, and the *essorium* of Fortunata, which (since he has quarrelled with *haec vipera*, 74.9 ff.) is mentioned next to the *cella perbona* of the *ostiarius*. All these strictly domestic features are put as objects of the verb *habet* (sc. *domus*) with which the sentence begins, and the porter's *cella* forms a natural final item in the list. The accommodation available for guests is then described in a separate sentence: *hospitium hospites capit*. It is surely more in keeping with the sense of the passage to take *hospitium* (*hospicium hospites* H, as also *paternum hospicium*, § 5) as the neuter noun describing another, and a separate, feature of the house, more especially since Trimalchio, after the reference to Scaurus, immediately continues his description with the words *et multa alia sunt quae statim vobis ostendam* — "... many other features. . . which . . .". Trimalchio's reconstruction-work has produced a house in the Greek or Hellenistic style (cf. A. Maiuri, *La Cena di Trimalchio*, Naples, 1945, Excurs. V, p. 244, „una casa . . . indubbiamente modellata piu sul tipo della casa ellenistica che della casa romana“), and in such a house we might expect to find a well-equipped *domuncula* for guests, probably with a separate entrance, as Vitruvius' description (VI. 7.4) indicates. Editors have therefore erred in regarding *capit* as the precise equivalent of $\chi\omega\rho\epsilon\tau$, in the sense of „holds“, „has room for“, whether an actual total be inserted (Reinesius, Burmann), or the number left indefinite (so Buecheler Friedlaender, Ernout, Marmorale) as in Dr. Thierfelder's own interpretation. Trimalchio is using *capit* in a more general sense: he is saying that, apart from the rooms of the

house proper, a separate *hospitium* „affords accommodation for“, „gives shelter to“, „receives“ guests. For *cipio* in this sense — equivalent to *excipere* (e.g., in Ovid, *Epist.* XV. 129: Livy, I. 22.5) or to *recipere* (e.g., Ovid, *Met.* V. 658: Hor., *Sat.* I. v. 80) — see. e.g., Hor., *Sat.* II. iii. 10, Virg., *Aen.* VIII. 363, and, in a different setting, Lucan, V. 10 (cf. Thes. L.L., s.v., 339,9 ff). The accommodation provided for such guests is not explained in detail, but would no doubt be revealed in the promised tour of inspection of the *multa alia*; its excellence is implied in the reference to Scaurus, who prefers to be entertained in Trimalchio's *hospitium*, where he could presumably rely on full enjoyment of the *secreta liberalitas* to which Vitruvius (loc. cit.) refers. Trimalchio thus displays not only his own material comforts and hospitality but also an influential friend and a minor social triumph over the owner of a neighbouring villa (*paternum hospitium*, „la casa hospitale di amici di suo padre“, Marmorale).

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