

[XXX]

Non licebat considerare. Nos iam ad triclinium perveneramus, in cuius parte prima procurator rationes accipiebat. Et quod praecipue miratus sum, in postibus triclinii fasces erant cum securibus fixi, quorum imam partem quasi embolum navis aeneum finiebat, in quo erat scriptum: C. POMPEIO TRIMALCHIONI SEVIRO AVGVSTALI CINNAMVS DISPENSATOR. Sub eodem titulo et lucerna bilychnis de camera pendebat, et duae tabulae in utroque poste defixae, quarum altera, si bene memini, hoc habebat inscriptum: III ET PRIDIE KALENDAS IANVARIAS C. NOSTER FORAS CENAT, altera lunae cursum stellarumque septem imagines pictas; et qui dies boni quique incommodi essent, distinguente bulla notabantur.

It was not possible to examine them. We had now come to the dining room, in the first part of which a proctor was receiving accounts. And what especially amazed me was that the door posts of the dining room were affixed rods and axes, which were on top of the bronze prow of a ship, upon which was inscribed "To Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio Augustal Servant [an honorary cult role] From Cinnamus His Steward". Beneath the inscription a double lamp hung from the arched roof and a tablet was fixed to each of the two door posts, one if I remember correctly had this inscription: "On the Day Before the First of January, Our Gaius Dines Out", the other was painted with pictures of the phases of the moon and seven stars; and the good days and which unlucky were marked with distinguishing studs.

His repleti voluptatibus cum conaremur in triclinium intrare, exclamavit unus ex pueris, qui super hoc officium erat positus: "Dextro pede!" Sine dubio paulisper trepidavimus, ne contra praeceptum aliquis nostrum limen transiret.

Having had enough of these delights we tried to enter the dining room, one of the [slave] boys posted on duty cried out "Right foot!". Of course we were rather startled that we might break some rule in crossing the threshold.

Ceterum ut pariter movimus dextros gressus, servus nobis despoliatus procubuit ad pedes ac rogare coepit, ut se poenae eriperemus: nec magnum esse peccatum suum, propter quod periclitaretur; subducta enim sibi vestimenta dispensatoris in balneo, quae vix fuissent decem sestertiorum. Retulimus ergo dextros pedes, dispensatoremque in atrio aureos numerantem deprecati sumus ut servo remitteret poenam. Superbus ille sustulit vultum et: “Non tam iactura me movet, inquit, quam neglegentia nequissimi servi. Vestimenta mea cubitoria perdidit, quae mihi natali meo cliens quidam donaverat, Tyria sine dubio, sed iam semel lota. Quid ergo est? dono vobis eum.”

Nonetheless we took a step with the right foot, a stripped slave threw himself before our feet and began to plead that we snatch him away from punishment: not that his was a great sin, as otherwise we would be in danger; for the steward's clothes had been stolen from him in the baths, which would scarcely come to ten sesterces. So we drew back our right feet and begged the steward who was counting gold pieces in the atrium that the slave be released from punishment. He put on a proud face and said “It's not then the loss that bothers me, but the carelessness of the slave that bothers me. He lost my dinner clothes which had been given to me by a certain client for my birthday, clearly Tyrian [purple] but only once dipped. But what of it? I give him to you.

Commentary on Chapter 34

Wine and food as source of pleasure is a recurring theme in the *Satyricon*, especially in the middle third of what has come down to us, the Feast of Trimalchio; indeed '*for Trimalchio wine is one of life's delights*'¹. This chapter lies towards the beginning of the feast. In the previous chapter although Trimalchio has already arrived he has insisted that his guests '*Permittetis tamen finire lusum*' *permit me however to finish this game [of dice]* and so it is only in Chapter 34 that he starts to really interact with his guests. The chapter is more or less entirely devoted to the topic of wine. The first half of the chapter introduces the topic of wine and then the issue of a slave breaking a dish is dealt with by wine. In the second half a wine that is labelled as being very old and special is brought in and praised by Trimalchio even to the extent of a poem recitation.

At the very beginning of the chapter the sudden and direct transition from gambling to drinking is shown by '*iam*' already coming at the very beginning of the first sentence and then the passage from '*lusu intermisso*' *having finished the game* to '*vellet mulsum*' *he wanted a honeyed [wine]* all happening within the sentence. The joyous sense that arises from the introduction of wine is indicated by engaging the sense of hearing through repeated reference to music. First '*subito signum symphonia*' *suddenly with a musical signal* the reader is reminded of the pace by *subito* and the musicality of the moment emphasised by the repeated musical 's' sound. The next reference to music is harsher 'c' sounds '*choro cantante*' *by a singing chorus*. The sounds are harsher as the relishes are '*rapiuntur*' *snatched away* and then a dish gets broken. Trimalchio's response is almost farcical in commanding that the dish be thrown down again. This farcicality is emphasised by the theatrical when the stages of the action are set out almost like three stage directions: '*animadvertit Trimalchio*' *Trimalchio noticed*; then '*obiugari puerum*' *the [slave] boy is punished*; finally '*proicere rursus paropsidem iussit*' *he ordered the dish be thrown down again*.

The second half of the chapter begins with another time word of sudden action at the beginning of a sentence '*subito*' *suddenly*. The wine is brought in and the sense of touch and sight engaged a little by detailed description of the contrasting transparency and textures of the container '*amphorae vitreae diligenter gypsatae*' *glass jars sealed with gypsum*. The exact text of the labels is set out as if it were an inscription to show its importance to Trimalchio. Though it does not have the '*abbreviations that were common in both formal and informal*'² inscriptions. Although this might be Petronius placing the reader's ease ahead of authenticity it seems more likely that this indirectly alludes to Trimalchio unwittingly revealing his vulgarity through a form of hypercorrectness of language.

This vulgarity through hypercorrectness is likely also reflected in the wine's '*somewhat fantastic*'³ claim to be '*ANNORVM CENTVM*' *ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD*, whereas of course a label would not say that as it would change as the years went by. The mystique of the wine is further emphasised by alliteration of 'v' sounds '*vivit vinum... vita vinum est*' *wine lives longer... there's*

¹ Hope (2010) p163

² Wheelock (2011) p74

³ Harrison (2010) p 201

life in wine. The mysteriousness of wine and its (apparently) long life allows Trimalchio to lead into the topic he wants to discuss: the brevity of human life, which he does rather theatrically by reciting a verse, which has similarities with '*tomb inscriptions*'⁴ especially the way it addresses the reader/listener with the first person plural '*Eheu nos miseros... ergo vivamus*' *Alas we wretches... therefore let us live*'.

This chapter has seen Trimalchio really address his guests at the dinner for the first time, having been engrossed in gambling earlier. The guests start to get a hint of how well choreographed his dinners are with the chapter being devoted to wine seemingly to lead into Trimalchio's comparing the (apparently) long life of wine with the brevity of human life, a topic that he will continue in later chapters. This chapter ends in a rather funereal mood with his reciting a verse that sounds rather like an epitaph.

⁴ Courtney (2001) p84