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## Speaking Out?

### Child Sexual Abuse and the Enslaved Voice in the *Cena Trimalchionis*

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All of those things play a part in who I am as a person. It all has equal weight. I want sexual abuse to sit happily alongside other topics like music and creativity, without this gut shudder, “Oh no, we can’t talk about that.”

—Rhodes 2015

This chapter tackles a difficult topic: child sexual abuse in Roman slavery. As a field of inquiry, the topic is difficult on at least three counts. First, confronting the sexual abuse of children, past or present, regularly solicits emotional responses. Psychologists speak of vicarious traumatization for instance of therapists and researchers who are exposed to disclosures of traumatic images and material by clients.<sup>1</sup> These responses have the potential to distort the researcher’s analytical focus and interpretive clarity, leading to biased reporting. Irrespective of its causes, historians’ apparent assumption of what has been called “the role of retrospective judges who render verdicts” has been heavily criticized, as in the contemporary debate on the use of court records to study the history of child sexual abuse in several Anglophone countries.<sup>2</sup> At stake are issues to do with the selection of the source material and the creation of deceptively smooth, coherent accounts from the “multiple (and sometimes competing) narratives” produced by what are often numerous and highly diverse historical actors.<sup>3</sup>

Second, child sexual abuse is a modern concept, first conceived of in the late nineteenth century but “made” and “molded,” as Ian Hacking puts it, in the twentieth.<sup>4</sup> Applying the concept to earlier historical periods is anachronistic by definition, raising ethical and methodological questions. Consequently,

historians must be mindful not to transpose their own modern value systems uncritically onto an earlier society. At the same time, historians must be mindful not to exploit an earlier society's otherness as justification for injudicious or naive engagement. Asking specifically after the historian's role in the study of child sexual abuse, Adrian Bingham and colleagues note that "historians do have a responsibility to move beyond a position of relativism that sees the past as always unknowable and thus purely a series of narratives."<sup>5</sup> But the relative novelty of the concept of child sexual abuse also means that its historical study is regularly hampered by the widespread lack of due identification of the abuse in what are now our sources. In their work on child sexual abuse in the United Kingdom prior to the 1980s, when the concept and term gained general parlance, Bingham et al. contend that "tracing child sexual abuse in the textual archive, therefore, requires us to identify and work with a range of older terminologies that were used to talk about 'abusers,' 'children' and 'sexual harm' across the century."<sup>6</sup> The second listed example, "children," points toward a hurdle of particular relevance to the ancient historian, namely the lack of a historically homogeneous conceptualization of childhood: the heated debate on childhood and youth in the ancient Roman world illustrates this well, even if differentiated Roman conceptualization of various life phases is well documented.<sup>7</sup> The difficulty that arises for the researcher is that of reliable detection and secure identification of specifically *child* sexual abuse, with regard also to the ensuing interpretation of and generalization from the observed patterns. Of special relevance for the present investigation is the fact that in Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices from AD 301, the age range of enslaved adults starts at sixteen, identifying the age of fifteen as the end of childhood for the purposes of price fixing—a yardstick, however crude, also adopted for present purposes.<sup>8</sup>

Third, one of the persistent features of the evidence for child sexual abuse is that the source material rarely includes the voice of the abused children. Even when such sources exist, these are typically mediated, that is, they are powerfully shaped by the processes that generated them for a specific purpose, guided for instance in the case of victims of child sexual abuse in recent history by the methods and goals of inquiry in a given judiciary system.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding this problem of evidence for the historical study of child sexual abuse, combined with the question over the historian's role in the research process, there is widespread agreement that materials produced with different aims in mind can nevertheless be used productively by historians in the study of the sexual abuse of children:

Historians who have worked with young people's statements have shown that they can be read "against the grain"—in other ways than their interlocutors originally intended—to reveal the difficult and abusive situations in which they found themselves, the scope for agency and resistance (albeit extremely limited) in order to cope and survive, and relationships with other peers, siblings or adults to whom they were either able or unable to make disclosures.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter also aims at a reading "against the grain." At its core is a single piece of evidence—a fictional text from the Roman imperial period that contains an autobiographical statement about sexual abuse experienced in childhood—the part referred to as the *Cena Trimalchionis* in the work known as Petronius's *Satyricon*.<sup>11</sup> Despite the immense chronological remoteness of the case under scrutiny and the fictional nature of the text, the discussion is subject to the same ethical and methodological issues that affect the study of child sexual abuse in more recent periods, even if some loom larger than others or take on different shades of meaning. For instance, what is in essence one of the most problematic dimensions of the ancient evidence *qua* evidence is simultaneously an advantage for the present undertaking: the unique and therefore self-contained nature of the chosen source. Moreover, the literary dimension of the text sets the present investigation from the outset into the world of multiple readings: what I focus on is one among several stories the text tells.<sup>12</sup> What increases the complexity of the present undertaking, on the other hand, is the coercive setting that frames the narrated abuse—slavery. Slavery not only enabled and promoted the intensive and extensive sexual exploitation of enslaved persons across space and time; it is of and by itself a subject that demands critical engagement from the modern researcher, including with regard to the legacy slavery has left on the world, most notably in racial, class, and gender terms and at their various intersections. It is therefore not surprising that, as Philip Morgan has shown for the study of modern black slavery, "moral judgements have continued to permeate the historical scholarship of slavery."<sup>13</sup> In spite of the chronological remoteness of specifically classical slavery—what Moses Finley referred to as a lack of "immediate significance"—the question of the moral responsibility of the historian cannot be ignored by the student of the ancient world either.<sup>14</sup>

But neither the ethical and methodological challenges nor the heightened stakes in the combined study of slavery and sexual abuse diminish its urgency. It is now widely recognized that an environment that promotes open discussion about sexual violence can facilitate a survivor's decision to speak about their

ordeal, a critical part of their healing process. Conversely, as Barry Coldrey put it in his survey of the relevant historical developments in northwestern Europe and the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, “the main barrier to reporting abuse is the climate of the times.”<sup>15</sup> Coldrey speaks of “a weather-change in public attitudes” in the second half of the twentieth century, facilitated by the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>16</sup> That weather-change is not complete, however, as the testimonies of survivors of child sexual abuse regularly illustrate: James Rhodes’s call for an environment in which sexual abuse is not marginalized in modern discourse stands. Historians can aid and advance the necessary transformation in public attitudes by bringing the matter to the fore through their scholarship, even if immediate significance—to borrow Finley’s term—is unlikely to be achieved.<sup>17</sup> As Amy Richlin has put it in brief, echoing E. H. Carr: “all reading entails judgment, including the choice of what to discuss.”<sup>18</sup>

Groundbreaking work in this regard has been accomplished in Roman studies by several scholars over the last decade or so—underpinned by the rich documentation of widespread sexual abuse of enslaved individuals in the ancient sources: Craig Williams notes that “a comprehensive catalogue of Roman texts that refer to men’s sexual use of their male and female slaves would be massive,” recalling Keith Bradley’s contention that ancient authors took “for granted the fact that slaves of both sexes and of all ages were objects of casual sexual pleasure.”<sup>19</sup> In particular, Richlin’s work has not only been seminal in the study of child sexual abuse in Roman slavery, but her contribution has also strongly foregrounded the perspective of the enslaved, most notably in her study of Plautine comedy. In the same vein, Toph Marshall has shown that Plautine comedy expresses a moral objection to the objectification of human beings comparable to ours precisely in the context of sexual exploitation.<sup>20</sup> In the present volume, William Owens adds another perspective on the enslaved voice in his study of Apuleius’s *Cupid and Psyche* (see chapter 12). At base, this recent research has elaborated and illustrated the existence of a voice in a textual universe—the Roman literary sources—that stands in contradistinction to that traditionally associated with this evidence, concentrated on the perspective of members of the cultural, political, and socioeconomic elites: “nous ne connaissons que les opinions des libres,” as Jerzy Kolendo summed up the (now outdated) view four decades ago.<sup>21</sup>

The present investigation, too, puts the voice of the enslaved, as well as the moral objection to sexual abuse in particular and objectification in slavery in general, at the heart of inquiry. By the end of this chapter, I shall suggest that

it is not only possible to hear the voice of the abused child in the text under scrutiny but that we must listen to that voice in the ancient evidence and resist participating in silencing and marginalizing the abused. I note at the outset that I use the term “enslaved voice” not to suggest that the *Satyricon* was written by an individual who knew slavery from experience. Rather, I argue that whatever the text’s authorship, the fact that this different voice is present suggests that the widespread idea of the alignment of the *Satyricon* as a whole with the dominant elite perspective on slavery is also in need of revision.<sup>22</sup> Before that, however, the posited abuse requires verification: doing so illustrates the contention regarding the structural similarity of the task of identification and substantiation for both ancient and modern historians, even if their respective source materials are normally vastly different.

#### SPEAKING ABOUT

The largest surviving part of the text known as Petronius’s *Satyricon* features what must be the most famous dinner party in Latin literature, the so-called *Cena Trimalchionis*. Traditionally regarded as a satire about the boorish efforts at social elevation of formerly enslaved human beings at Rome, the *Cena* has increasingly attracted rich modern commentary on the references to sexual activities, including sexual abuse, that are littered across the text.<sup>23</sup> In particular, in what is widely known as Trimalchio’s autobiography, the dinner’s host speaks about the sexual exploitation that he experienced in childhood:<sup>24</sup>

tam magnus ex Asia ueni 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 ipsimi annos quattuordecim fui. nec turpe est quod dominus iubet. ego tamen et ipsimae satis faciebam. scitis quid dicam: taceo, quia non sum de gloriosis.

I came from Asia as big as this candelabrum. To come to the point, I used to measure myself daily against it, and in order that I might have more quickly a bearded beak, I used to grease my lips from the lamp. Nevertheless, I was my master’s *deliciae* at fourteen/for fourteen years. Nor is what one’s master orders shameful. But I also used to satisfy my mistress. You know what I’m saying: I’ll say no more, because I am not one of the boastful ones.

Trimalchio had already mentioned the sexual engagement with the wife of the man he calls *dominus* earlier on in the dinner proceedings:<sup>25</sup>

sic me saluum habeatis, ut ego sic solebam ipsumam meam debattuere, ut etiam dominus suspicaretur; et ideo me in uilicationem relegauit.

By my hope of salvation, I used to bang my own mistress; until even the master became suspicious; and so he demoted me to a stewardship.

These autobiographical comments establish a number of key points in the life of the formerly enslaved Trimalchio.<sup>26</sup> Important for present purposes is the fact that Trimalchio remembers that he arrived in Italy before adulthood, even if it is not possible to determine his precise age. The standard view (often only implicitly articulated) is that Trimalchio was around the age of seven or eight then; this has been deduced from an understanding of his reference to the candelabrum as a candle-stand of about one meter in height.<sup>27</sup> It is equally difficult to ascertain at what age Trimalchio was chosen as *deliciae*—a term with multiple connotations, like its various cognates (*delicium* and *delicatus*): the range of meaning includes the beloved child, the “human pet,” and the sex object.<sup>28</sup> Given this ambiguity, Arthur Pomeroy argued against a sexual dimension of Trimalchio’s role, noting that Trimalchio’s defensive remark (*nec turpe est quod dominus iubet*) “is as likely to refer to the embarrassment of being an infantile object of entertainment” as to having been sexually abused; he supported his argument by reference to examples of children kept as “human pets” that are prominent in the surviving literary sources of the imperial age.<sup>29</sup> But as Marilyn Skinner has pointed out, for each of the *deliciae* relationships of Trimalchio and his freedmen guests, “there are strong indications that the relationship is erotic. . . . All these pairings replicate Trimalchio’s youthful experience.”<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Trimalchio establishes an explicit parallel between satisfying the *dominus*’s wife, which must surely be read sexually, and being the man’s *deliciae*, removing any doubt as to the nature of the latter relationship. Finally, Trimalchio gives no indication that this relationship was anything but profoundly one-sided—initiated, maintained, and ended entirely at the will and to the benefit of his enslaver, enabled through the powers that come with the domination of other human beings through slavery.

Trimalchio’s temporal reference pertaining to the abuse—*annos quattuordecim*—is (also) ambiguous: most render the phrase as “for fourteen years,” potentially taking Trimalchio from childhood to early adulthood over those years, say from age ten or eleven to twenty-five, or over an earlier life span, as did Thomas Wade Richardson, suggesting seven to twenty-one.<sup>31</sup> Pomeroy went

even earlier (albeit, as noted, questioning the sexual dimension), arguing that there is no reason “Trimalchio’s career as *deliciae* should not have extended over fourteen years from early childhood to age seventeen or eighteen,” so from three or four years of age onward (thereby inadvertently reducing the age when Trimalchio arrived in Italy).<sup>32</sup> In support of his argument, Pomeroy contended that fourteen was too late to assume the role of *deliciae*: “the major difficulty is that there is no evidence elsewhere in our sources for the assumption of the role of child-substitute at such an advanced age.”<sup>33</sup> In the light of Pomeroy’s mistaken focus on nonsexual relationships, the cited evidence lacks relevance.

How old Trimalchio was when the abuse began and how long it lasted obviously influence the interpretation of his autobiography. It is therefore critical that Michael Reeve has made a case for a rendering of the morphologically unusual phrasing as “at 14” in place of “for fourteen years.”<sup>34</sup> As John Bodel noted, Reeve’s argument “seems to imply that Trimalchio’s service *ad delicias* lasted only a year”—much too short in Bodel’s view, assuming therefore that “grammar and sense are in conflict”; Bodel plainly rejected the notion that the abuse took place when Trimalchio was fourteen, a touch too late in his opinion, citing the “widespread ancient view that boyhood ended, biologically as well as juridically, at the end of the fourteenth year.”<sup>35</sup> Richardson expressed similar doubt: nowhere “is it specified that the flower of youth lasts but a single year.”<sup>36</sup>

But Reeve’s linguistic argument that pinpoints the abuse experienced by Trimalchio to the age of fourteen is supported by the broader context of a preference for adolescent boys, probably aged around twelve to eighteen, for pederastic sex, on which the passage plays.<sup>37</sup> It finds additional support in a contextualized reading (or rather, viewing) of the passage in which Trimalchio describes his futile effort at advancing his “bearded beak” through lamp oil—for the lampstand in question is surely not of the short table-top type hitherto championed by modern scholars but an anthropomorphized one, like the near life-size ephobic bronze *lychnouchos* discussed in the chapter by Sarah Levin-Richardson in this volume (chapter 10; see fig. 10.4). The reference to this type of lampstand augments the instrumentalization of enslaved individuals in a Roman house: as Ruth Bielfeldt has put it in her art historical analysis of the scene, it is easy to imagine how Trimalchio “might have been the servant responsible for tending the lamps at the banquet.”<sup>38</sup> It follows that Trimalchio must be understood to have been at least eleven, perhaps twelve, years of age then, leaving a window of around one to two years for his attempt

at escaping what was in store for him in the world controlled by those who fashioned themselves as *domini*.

All that said, there is an attraction in reading Trimalchio's *annos quattuordecim* as both pinpointing and limiting the sexual abuse to Trimalchio's fourteenth year: the logical consequence of this reading is that Trimalchio is effectively staged as one of a string and thus larger number of adolescent boys abused by the *dominus*, year after year.<sup>39</sup> There is indeed no reason to think that the sexual abuse of individual adolescent boys was, by definition, of lengthy duration in the kind of household sketched by Trimalchio. In fact, given the ease with which new *deliciae* could be procured, such as at the market or from among existing enslaved household members, it is difficult to imagine that the standard approach by those who sexually abused the enslaved in their households was marked by constancy.<sup>40</sup> By way of comparison, in the eighteenth century, Thomas Thistlewood, a planter and slaver in western Jamaica, compiled a diary, written in schoolboy Latin, of his sexual encounters, recording 3,852 occasions, with 138 women, almost all enslaved women of color, documenting some considerable divergences between the duration of individual sexual "relations," ranging from one-off molestations and rape to recurrent and even longer-term interactions with some women: "In a typical year," commented James Walvin, Thistlewood "took fourteen different partners, and had sex 108 times"; Walvin added that "what distinguished Thistlewood from the thousands of other men like him was the simple fact that he kept a diary."<sup>41</sup> Without the kind of diary produced by Thistlewood, the sexual abuse of the majority of the affected women would have stood little chance of entering the documentary record, including the lack of constancy that marked these interactions.<sup>42</sup> The case of the pedophile surgeon Joël Le Scouarnec, taken to court on several counts of child abuse in March 2020 at the Cour d'Assises de Charente-Maritime in France, highlights the underlying documentary issue further. In this case, the police investigations unearthed, almost incidentally, what have been called his "carnets noirs," a carefully maintained written record of the sexual abuse of a total of 349 children, over twenty-eight years.<sup>43</sup> Again, without this kind of record, the abuse of the majority of the affected children would likely never have come to the fore, including the nearly permanent threat that Le Scouarnec posed to his child patients. The same point is driven home with force by Thomas Foster in his related discussion of the sexual abuse of black men under US slavery: "it would be an error to assume that the pattern of surviving sources reflects the historical practice of abuse. Indeed, the unlikelihood that cases would have been documented

at all suggests that it would be safe to say that, regardless of location and time period, no enslaved man would have been safe from the threat of sexual abuse.<sup>44</sup> For the ancient Roman world, there is no reason to assume a fundamentally different scenario regarding the patterns produced by the sources, their emphases (on the seemingly longer-term and nonsexually abusive relations), and omissions (of the potentially much more numerous one-off and short-term sexual abuses): we need to contextualize Trimalchio's abuse as the caricatured depiction of the tip of the iceberg.

The proposed interpretation of a number of abused adolescents of whom Trimalchio represented just the tip of the iceberg at one point is textually corroborated by a much later comment by the dinner host. In the course of telling various stories, Trimalchio mentions the death of an abused *delicatus*, at a time when he himself was still a young(er), pampered boy:<sup>45</sup>

cum adhuc capillatus essem, nam a puero uitam Chiam gessi, ipsimi nostri delicatus decessit, mehercules margaritum, catamitus et omnium numerum.

While I still had long hair, for I lived a pampered life from boyhood, my master's human sex-toy died. Oh my god was he a pearl, a Ganymede and perfect in all respects/one of the best/one in a thousand/knowing all the positions.

Pomeroy noted that the boy “was perhaps [Trimalchio's] predecessor.”<sup>46</sup> If seen from the point of view of sexual abuse adopted regarding *deliciae* and *delicati*, Trimalchio emerges as the potential replacement of this boy in the role of sex object, not that of “child-substitute” or “human pet.” It has long been noted that Trimalchio's description of the deceased *delicatus* is ambiguous in multiple ways (above and beyond the problem over the text regarding *catamitus*).<sup>47</sup> In translating the passage, I borrowed inter alia Martin Smith's suggestion of a possible double entendre for *omnium numerum*—“a lad who knew all the positions.”<sup>48</sup> But the numerical allusion in this description—“one of the best/one in a thousand”—channels attention on the larger pool of boys from which the *delicati/deliciae* were drawn in the household: neither the *deliciae* Trimalchio nor the deceased *delicatus* were isolated cases; each was only one among many thus abused. The underlying scenario that Trimalchio's seemingly egocentric autobiographical comments reveal is, then, that of a regularly replenished pool of potential substitutes, and *delicati/deliciae* drawn from a specific group of boys—the *capillati*, boys who are deemed sexually

attractive, like the ones whom the arriving dinner guests meet playing a ball game with Trimalchio, explicitly described as “worth looking at.”<sup>49</sup> Noting that “long-haired boys were marked out as *delicati*,” Gareth Schmeling stressed that “the connection between *capillatus* and *delicatus/catamitus* is close,” citing several ancient authors in support.<sup>50</sup> The other four references to *capillati* in the *Cena* illustrate this view: the just mentioned ball-playing *pueri*, commented on for their looks; the painting of Trimalchio as a *capillatus*, identifying his youthful (and by extension attractive) age; the long-haired Ethiopian *pueri*, who bring wine and an exotic flair in their own person to the dinner table; and finally the *pueri capillati* who physically pamper the guests by anointing their feet.<sup>51</sup> Notably, although all five occasions in the *Cena* in which *capellati* play a role advance their perception as sexually attractive and available, none go further. When Trimalchio counterpositions himself as *capillatus* with the *delicatus* of the *dominus*, he opens the view on his *future*, in what has often been called by modern scholars a “career path”—a notion that is contained in Trimalchio’s description of his assumption of the role of *deliciae* as *ad delicias*.<sup>52</sup> Seen this way, we might then think of Trimalchio’s ball-playing with his own *pueri capillati* as part of the grooming process.<sup>53</sup> The rules of Roman slavery made such grooming of course technically redundant, but apart from the resulting familiarization between abuser and abused, and the “readying” of the *capillati* for what was next, the playful dimension of this particular scene points to a kind of foreplay that the caricatured *domini* may have enjoyed in its own right.<sup>54</sup> Note in this context the guests’ kissing of another *puer* described as extraordinarily attractive (*puer speciosus*), the singing Dionysus, who is to all appearances not (yet) Trimalchio’s *deliciae* and who may be seen as part of the described pool, albeit by all accounts on the way to being more fully abused.<sup>55</sup>

To be clear, I am not proposing a rigid distinction between *capillati* and *delicati* in terms of sexual abuse; the differentiation serves primarily to tease out some elements of Trimalchio’s *Life* not yet fully appreciated. Moreover, scholars should not be fooled by the positive notion of a “career path”: the notion jars with Trimalchio’s description of his fraught attempt to develop what he calls his bearded beak (*rostrum barbatum*) to avoid becoming himself an abused human sex toy.<sup>56</sup> As has long been noted, the emphasis in Trimalchio’s statement is on the ensuing *tamen*: “Nevertheless, I was my master’s *deliciae*.” As Richardson has put it, the *tamen* is “strongly adversative.”<sup>57</sup> Trimalchio’s description of his action underscores his sincere endeavor to “skip” what was in store for him, by reaching adulthood faster, thus losing the boyish sexual

appeal cherished in *deliciae*. The view from the career path is, then, external, empirically describing Trimalchio's "advancement" in the household of his *dominus* (i.e., what *has* happened). But it cannot replace or marginalize Trimalchio's memory of his desire and actions to avoid the "promotion"—a point I return to below.

The perspective opened here onto the many others in Trimalchio's position satisfactorily explains the termination of Trimalchio's role as *deliciae* in a reading of *annos quattuordecim* as "at 14"—for there were several for the *dominus* to get newly excited about, thereby removing the tension articulated by Richardson over what he called "the flower of youth." This is not to suggest that there was only one boy abused at a time; Trimalchio's own story tells differently. Thus, having himself turned into an abuser as an adult, he lavishes kisses on several boys in the course of the dinner proceedings: apart from the singing Dionysus, Trimalchio causes an argument with his wife by kissing another handsome boy (*puer non inspeciosus*)—neither of whom is given the title of *deliciae*, which is held by (the not so crisp) Croesus (*puer uetulus*).<sup>58</sup> In its totality, the text clearly depicts a number of boys abused sexually in different ways by the dinner host (and the guests). It follows that however we should imagine the posited pool and the gradations in it in detail, grammar and sense are in very good order in understanding Trimalchio's abuse to have occurred "at 14," as Reeve suggested. At the same time, the proposed scenario significantly increases the sense of commodification and utilization in Trimalchio's memory of slavery—used and abused to order, as if selected *au choix* from an ever-changing dinner menu, to be discarded at will when the *dominus* took a different fancy to another *capillatus*.

All that said, it would be rash to exclude a second meaning behind *annos quattuordecim*—especially since others, such as Hubert Petersmann, have pointed out the possibility of the survival of earlier, by-then-outdated linguistic usages in Trimalchio's speech that explain his odd morphological choice in his temporal reference to the abuse.<sup>59</sup> In fact, it is attractive to see in this earlier usage a model for Trimalchio's own life, in which his sexual abuse belongs to another, earlier phase too, at the point at which he speaks as an adult.<sup>60</sup> The joke behind this other "hearing" (i.e., "for fourteen years") at the interpretive level widely privileged in the study of the *Satyricon* is self-evident: like much else in Trimalchio's *Life*, even with regard to his subjection to sexual abuse, things go "wrong" and he ends up being the "old" and ugly *deliciae*, a prototype for his own *puer uetulus*, Croesus.<sup>61</sup> The ambiguity of meaning is intentional in my view: it focuses the reader's mind to grasp

what is being told, thereby increasing confrontation with the multifaceted and malleable reality of human exploitation in slavery—here, the range from seasonal to long-term abuse. How old Trimalchio was when he became sexually involved with the wife of his abuser is equally left to conjecture. The implication is that this depended on Trimalchio's sexual maturation, and that it occurred potentially simultaneously with the (start of his) sexual abuse at the hands of her husband or not long thereafter.

#### SPEAKING OUT

Trimalchio's statement about the sexual abuse that he experienced as an adolescent contains potentially contradictory comments. On the one hand, he acknowledges his (failed) attempt to prevent the abuse. On the other hand, he appears to defend the abuse, just stopping short of boasting about his own sexual role in it. This apparent self-implication regarding the sexual engagement in particular with the *dominus's* wife has been employed as a window on the agency of the enslaved, to the point of suggesting that "some may even have welcomed the situation" as a means of personal advancement.<sup>62</sup> More broadly, the abuse at the hands of the *dominus* is widely read as "a fact of which [Trimalchio] is now *somewhat* ashamed" (emphasis added), while his sexual involvement with the man's wife is effectively used to (further) downplay the abuse.<sup>63</sup> But apart from constituting an opening on the wider context of sexual abuse in his enslaver's household, the statement in Trimalchio's own voice also constitutes an opening for a quite different reading of the relevant comments to what has just been briefly summarized, one that challenges notions of personal advancement or choice on the part of the enslaved and retrospectively justifies my application of the term "sexual abuse" to the subject at hand, irrespective of its antiquity. This other voice in Trimalchio's autobiographical statement is more readily discernible against a backdrop of modern survivor statements, as will presently be seen.

In 2015, an Australian woman called Annie, aged forty-two, chose to contact the police to report the sexual abuse that she had suffered thirty years earlier, while a child, at the hands of an Anglican priest.<sup>64</sup> Annie recalls having been raped by the man on several occasions. Thirty years later, she was conscious that the abuse had "robbed her of her childhood and left her without an identity." When looking at her own twelve-year-old daughter, Annie noticed that she "found [herself] thinking, 'She's so tiny. She is so little.'" And, Annie added, "I realised I was actually talking about myself, not her," thus conceptualizing her own vulnerability and innocence at the time of the abuse.

Like many survivors of child sexual abuse, Annie experienced significant emotional and physical changes in her life even after the abuse had stopped, including massive weight gain, climaxing in suicide attempts. Annie first tried to speak about her ordeal to another clergyman in her church community in the mid-1990s; the man “questioned Annie’s memory of what happened and told her that if she told anyone else, people would think she wanted it, that she was partly responsible.” Annie was also made to “think of the lives that could be ruined by [her speaking out]”—encouraging her to remain silent for many more years. In addition, Annie’s mother called her “a slut and a whore” and accused Annie of “breaking up the family by causing trouble.” Twenty years later, when Annie was ready to talk to the police about the abuse, she explained that “there is a certain kind of freedom that comes with coming forward.” Summing up what it meant to speak out—“I am a person coming forward and coming forward means that you are saying you are a person. You’re not a thing”—Annie commented on the role of others in the survivor’s process of speaking out, that is, to “help amplify a silent voice.”

But even when Annie was ready to contact the police, the process of speaking out was still drawn out, including significant hesitation on Annie’s part to share all of her story with those close to her, especially her husband, Mark. Annie did not allow Mark to be present at some of her police interviews: “She’s telling them things,” Mark commented, that “she doesn’t want me to hear.” And, he added, “she’s still convinced that there are things, when I hear about them, that will be it. That I’ll never be able to look at her again.” Mark’s reflection captures well the shame and humiliation experienced by survivors of child sexual abuse.

Modern psychologists are clear that

the act of touching the abuser’s genitals changes everything for the child. It can leave the child believing that not only have they participated in the act, but they may even feel they were responsible for instigating what happened, leaving them confused as to whether or not it is abuse . . . the child often takes on the responsibility for the abuse. Developing strong beliefs around personal involvement/collusion or engagement in the act can lead to the adult survivor feeling that telling someone would be more like a confession than reporting of a crime.<sup>65</sup>

The negative repercussions of sexual abuse in childhood on the lives of the survivors cannot be overestimated. The range and intensity of the effects

differ from survivor to survivor, but there are significant overlaps and patterns: anxiety and depression are prevalent; posttraumatic stress disorder comes next.<sup>66</sup> As already noted, there also exists a widespread sense of self-blame and shame on the part of the abused, leading regularly to withdrawal from relationships and friendships and, as in Annie's case, to a lasting lack of trust even in those close to her. Many survivors develop a sense of a shortened future. Boys especially experience confusion over their gender identity, feeling "less of a man" and suffering from a sense of having lost control over their bodies.<sup>67</sup>

Although many survivors find it nearly impossible to succeed in life, others excel in a desperate effort to make up and cover up. Dan, for instance, described himself as taking the role of "the tough guy": "this was all a mask to protect myself. To the outside world, I was a 'normal' guy." Having grown up in a "very 'macho' environment," Dan struggled with social attitudes around "maleness" in his recovery process, encouraging the role-play of making up and covering up. What made the situation additionally difficult for Dan was the fact that his abuser regularly bestowed attention and favors on him in the world of US football in which Dan met the man. Much like Dan, David spent considerable efforts on covering up, in his case by increasingly focusing attention on his "appearance, intellect, and physical exercise; manifesting an illusion of perfection to cover my wounded child within." David consequently "graduated from two colleges, earning both an undergraduate degree and a graduate degree in my chosen profession. I also passed the state boards to be licensed in my chosen profession." His success in his professional life functioned as both a coping mechanism for and a disguise of his abuse in childhood.<sup>68</sup>

The few examples discussed here can hardly do justice to the many pains and pained memories that survivors of child sexual abuse and those close to them have to deal with, the variety of coping mechanisms, the diversity of healing processes, and the many desperate attempts to end the pain through physical self-torture as well as suicide, of which Annie is but one example. But this short résumé of some typical effects of child sexual abuse today constitutes a badly needed sounding board for hearing Trimalchio's autobiography *differently*. For example, as noted, scholars have repeatedly stressed Trimalchio's apparent bragging about his sexual involvement with the wife of the *dominus*, to the point of understanding the seeming boast to lessen the force of the abuse. But Trimalchio's boastfulness, and the male chauvinism contained in it, gains a different meaning if understood as an element of the

mask of a “tough guy”—a protection mechanism rather than any genuine expression of attitude or emotion. Moreover, the sense of self-implication on Trimalchio’s part need not reflect reality either. The sexually abused regularly develop a sense of involvement and may even take responsibility for the acts they experience: Dan thought he was “BAD.”<sup>69</sup> Seen this way, the sense of responsibility in Trimalchio’s boast is exposed as a psychological distortion, arising from the abused child’s mental confusion over their agency in the abuse. Notably, the narrative implies that Trimalchio is telling his listeners something new: his speaking about his abuse has not been a long-standing party trick, irrespective of the seeming ease with which he delivers his autobiographical statement. As just suggested, part of that statement (still) reflects the mental attitudes of the abused child, drawing on coping mechanisms such as tough, “macho,” and chauvinist behaviors, to give the illusion of being what Dan called “a ‘normal’ guy.” It is also striking that Trimalchio does not talk about the actual sexual acts: this stands in gross contrast to the explicit nature of other texts.<sup>70</sup> In fact, Trimalchio implies that everyone knows what he is too embarrassed to say (*scitis quid dicam*), telling himself to shut up (*taceo*). This and his earlier shamed defense of the abuse (*nec turpe est quod dominus iubet*) recalls Annie’s shame at telling her story, including the omission of details.<sup>71</sup>

As already stated, modern scholarship has foregrounded the defensive and the boastful sides of Trimalchio’s comment that there is nothing shameful in doing what the *dominus* orders. But as just discussed, the considerable confusion in a child’s mind regarding their agency in the sexual abuse means that speaking out can feel more like a confession, including a considerable level of culpability that those who confess experience. The examples from Trimalchio’s autobiography illustrate this confessional mode, however grotesquely distorted, thereby identifying his speech act not just as a means to speak about the abuse (i.e. to provide information on it) but as a means to speak out, thus to give voice to what David called the “wounded child within.”<sup>72</sup> Earlier in the dinner, the guests are told that Glyco’s *dispensator*, having been caught with the *dominus*’s wife, is punished by being made to fight in the arena. Echion rhetorically asks, “What has the slave done wrong who was forced to do it?” (*quid seruus peccauit, qui coactus est facere?*).<sup>73</sup> Trimalchio’s *nec turpe est* adds a survivor’s dimension to Echion’s question: in this reading, we can take his *non sum de gloriosis*—“I am not one of the boastful ones”—at face value.

In the previous section, I devoted considerable space to discussing the temporal indicator *annos quattuordecim*. As stated then, the introductory *tamen* is

“strongly adversative,” to borrow from Richardson’s formulation once more. This is important not just for interpreting the temporal indicator itself—for if we read the *tamen* with the testimonies of Annie, Dan, and David in mind, Trimalchio’s pain takes center stage. Despite his utmost endeavors to prevent and escape from the ordeal of sexual abuse, he ended up (*tamen*) in the role of *deliciae*. Trimalchio’s *tamen* thus echoes the “wounded child within” who tried to get away from the abuse, thereby enlarging the window onto the agency of the abused that stands counter to that hitherto foregrounded by modern scholarship. The self-directed action of artificially advancing one’s physical maturity is geared toward avoiding the sexual engagement, powerfully underscored by the pained *tamen*; it is not geared toward welcoming a situation of potential personal advancement. As Bielfeldt has put it regarding the lampstand: the alliance (as she calls it) forged by Trimalchio with the candelabrum “has an emancipatory potential and gives Trimalchio the chance to grow out of his enslaved and instrumentalized condition,” so that “Trimalchio opposes his social objectification.”<sup>74</sup> In sum, to ignore the “wounded child within” in Trimalchio’s *tamen* means missing an important textual dimension—namely the voice of the desperate boy who seeks escape from his ordeal but fails.<sup>75</sup>

The proposed reading of the passage as a survivor’s statement is strengthened by adopting Trimalchio’s viewpoint on his candelabrum. Bodel has rightly commented that the object is “a memento of the days when [Trimalchio’s] youthful charms exposed him to the unwelcome sexual attention of his owner,” discussing literary echoes and historical parallels.<sup>76</sup> But if the passage is read through Annie’s eyes, Trimalchio’s seemingly factual description of his boyhood by comparison with the candelabrum represents the adult survivor’s pained memory of his vulnerability as a child and the candelabrum as a memento not of “a rather unsavoury period of his life” but of the child’s quintessential defenselessness: “so tiny,” “so little” in Annie’s words.<sup>77</sup> It is notable in this context that Bodel has also commented that “the young Trimalchio’s submission to his master in itself would not have excited much comment in antiquity.”<sup>78</sup> This perspective subscribes to the view that the enslaved (too) would have taken their sexual abuse for granted. But what does an adolescent boy take for granted, let alone a younger child? To be sure, several Roman jurists identify twelve as the age of lawful consent to marriage for Roman girls (fourteen for boys), implying that sexual activity was not seen as essentially out of place for this age group.<sup>79</sup> Yet, although the jurists deal with scenarios that demonstrate (even) earlier betrothals, it does not follow that sexual activity was regarded as the norm from that age onward, irrespective of

social level or cultural grouping, also among the free: the (disputed) evidence for actual marriage ages suggests otherwise.<sup>80</sup> More to the point, if we are prepared to see in Trimalchio's autobiography more than a bold résumé of his "rise from slavery to freedom and prosperity," but a survivor's statement, the text contains a bitter and sharp critique, through the voice of a survivor, of the ruthless sexual abuse imposed on the enslaved by those who claimed the powers of ownership over them, constituting precisely the kind of comment that Bodel doubted.<sup>81</sup> The very act of speaking out, as Annie, Dan, and David made clear, confronts, challenges, and ultimately rejects the abusers' abhorrent actions and associated entitlements vis-à-vis the body of the abused. There is, more broadly, no space in this voice for acknowledging what Riccardo Vattuone has called "una nuova libertà" in his discussion of the eroticized relations between an adult enslaver and a younger boy enslaved to him in the *Anthologia Palatina*.<sup>82</sup>

It is important to emphasize at this juncture that Trimalchio's speaking out is fully embedded in the diegetic universe, whereas his speech act remains separated from the external perspective represented by the diegetic narrator, thus creating a narratological distinction between the world of Roman elite perceptions and perspectives and that of the enslaved voice. This, however, means that the *Cena* does not tell a single story at the expense of the enslaved and formerly enslaved, as traditionally held. Rather, through Trimalchio's speaking out, the *Cena* (also) articulates a profound rejection of Roman practice and thought, concentrated on the sexual abuse of enslaved minors in the households of the wealthy.<sup>83</sup> It may be objected that this rejection is less profound because Trimalchio is staged as an abuser in other scenes, briefly mentioned earlier, himself performing (and conforming to) the criticized practice. However, the pain and suffering experienced by victims of child sexual abuse is not erased or even lessened in cases in which the affected individuals later became abusers themselves.<sup>84</sup> We have, therefore, no license to mute Trimalchio's speaking out through the cycle of abuse that the *Cena* also illustrates. The speaking out is part of the story, no matter what else the text articulates through Trimalchio the abuser.

#### CONCLUSION

"Speak up, speak loud and speak on. Give your voice to the voiceless, and build the much-needed platform where no story is taboo." Thus concludes a recent feature on sexual abuse in *Brown Girl Magazine*.<sup>85</sup> Notwithstanding the importance of letting survivors speak for themselves, thus to advance *their*

healing process by finding *their* voices, the issue raised by the article concerned the wider climate in which survivors may feel emboldened to come forward.<sup>86</sup> The argument put forward in the present chapter that culminated in giving a voice to the perspective of those who were subjected to sexual abuse in Roman slavery seeks to help build this platform where “no story is taboo,” thus contributing to a cultural change today.<sup>87</sup> Modern scholars have on occasion been hesitant to speak unreservedly about abuse in the case of the sexual engagements described by Trimalchio with the man he calls *dominus* and especially the man’s wife. Personal advancement, male chauvinism, and sexual conceit have all had a share in lessening the force of the abuse narrated by Trimalchio in our historical imagination, recalling the many deflections in discussions of sexual transgressions in circulation today.<sup>88</sup> The scholarly search for agency on the part of the enslaved has provided the mitigating analytical padding for seeing elements of choice (or at the very least opportunism) in Trimalchio’s story, aimed at restoring human subjecthood to the (formerly) enslaved. As is well known, a chief problem with foregrounding agency in slavery is that it leads to obscuring the brutality of the institution. The practical question that arises from this dilemma has been sharply formulated by Morgan: “Scholarly attempts to strike a balance between the structural coerciveness of slavery and the agency of slaves necessarily involve value judgments. Where to apply the weight is the fundamental question.”<sup>89</sup> By definition, different scholars will apply the weight differently—as various chapters in the present volume illustrate well—and they may do so differently at different times and regarding different topics. But there can be little doubt that the student of the ancient world needs to be on the alert when writing about evidence that documents the sexual use of enslaved persons, mindful of whose perspective they are representing (and whose are muted) in their historiographic reconstructions as well as where to locate enslaved agency—in the textually corroborated effort to escape the ordeal or in the theoretically possible opportunism behind being “favored.” Furthermore, the mobilization of one abuse to minimize another—such as that of Trimalchio by the *dominus* through that by the man’s wife—is doubtful historiographic practice, even if the line between restoring subjecthood and denying personhood is not always easily discernible in the thicket of complex evidence and modern agendas. But the search for agency has also been exposed as effectively side-tracking what Walter Johnson has called “consideration of human-ness lived outside the conventions of liberal agency,” by presupposing a rational choice model for human life, including for the condition of enslaved humanity.<sup>90</sup> The sexual

abuse of enslaved people in the Roman world invites us to think harder about what we mean when imagining choice and opportunism in the willing submission to an enslaver's sexual desires. Echion's biting remark about the coercion behind the sexual acts performed by Glyco's *dispensator* speaks a telling language. The road traveled in this chapter has taken up that language, in the voice of Trimalchio, demonstrating that our sources can be found to say that the survivor is not a "thing," as Annie has challenged us to do.<sup>91</sup> To arrive at that point does not require the admission of choice or opportunism on the part of the enslaved regarding their subjection to sexual abuse.<sup>92</sup>

Nor are choice or opportunism the driving forces behind the inclusion of sexual abuse as a distinct feature of the depiction of slavery in the *Cena*. As is widely recognized, the *Cena* deals with "types."<sup>93</sup> Whatever the exaggerations and distortions, Trimalchio's rotten taste and seemingly futile efforts at social recognition have repeatedly been taken as essentially reliable guides to an elite perspective on "freed life": Bodel, for instance, speaks of the "widespread perception among the Roman slaveholding classes."<sup>94</sup> In short, the *Cena* is generally used as a window onto Roman elite preoccupations in the principate. Viewed that way, the conspicuous place of child sexual abuse in the *Cena* emerges as a conspicuous element of the Roman elites' conceptual appreciation of the enslaved, that is, it transpires as a constituent element of the dominant Roman public transcript: sexual abuse "made masters" as much as it "made slaves." Put another way, the *Cena* shows that the Roman elite cannot conceive of slavery without child sexual abuse: whatever our ability to assess its quantitative occurrence, child sexual abuse was at the core of Roman slaving, structuring relations of dominance and subjection in real life where and when abuse occurred or was threatened as well as the conceptual underpinnings of Roman slavery more broadly.<sup>95</sup>

But the presented argument also shows that already in antiquity, the voiceless were actually given a voice, in ways that suggest heightened familiarity with the contexts and consequences of what we call child sexual abuse today. Notwithstanding my introductory comments on authorship, a thought experiment helps illustrate the point. Some scholars have argued that the *Satyricon* was composed by Pliny's *lector* Encolpius: if that idea is taken further, on what grounds should we exclude that Encolpius knew the world of sexual abuse from his own experience?<sup>96</sup> Like Encolpius, David was able to reach high professional acclaim, thereby making up and covering up for the wounded child within. This provides a context for seeing Trimalchio's professional achievements in a different light, too.<sup>97</sup> Just because we "meet" ancient individuals

typically only once in their lifetime—through a single piece of evidence that provides a static snapshot—it is naive to deny their familiarity, through their earlier experience, with a practice for which “there is widespread evidence,” as Thomas Wiedemann put it, especially if we are dealing with enslaved individuals such as Encolpius.<sup>98</sup> In the United States today, 12–40 percent of children experience some form of sexual abuse.<sup>99</sup> There is little reason to think a smaller figure applied to the enslaved in the ancient Roman world.

It is high time that modern scholars lend a closer ear to Trimalchio’s desperation: there is a reason why, to speak with Niall Slater, “he sounds desperate to be believed.”<sup>100</sup> To be sure, classical antiquity cherished values and displayed attitudes distinct from many of those held high in the world today: “child sexual abuse” is a modern term and concept, not an ancient one, as fully acknowledged.<sup>101</sup> But there is a difference between trying to understand an ancient society on its own terms and effectively downplaying practices now formally—and quite rightly—rejected, not least because the formal rejection has not yet led to their actual erasure, a point also made by Marshall in his contextualization of sex slavery in Greek New Comedy through the experience of forced sex workers in Southeast Asia.<sup>102</sup> In any case, we must ask whose terms we are potentially respecting when we accept that the sexual abuse of enslaved children was taken for granted in antiquity: that of the “favored” fourteen-year-old? The question we end up with is whose history we want to write. Here, too, the weight will be applied differently.

In this chapter, I have implied (not argued) that modern, abused childhood can inform our understanding of abused childhood in antiquity: in unequal challenges, the burden of proof is on those who deny the powerless their voice. Admittedly, I have only superficially scratched the *Cena’s* surface for that voice, leaving much unanswered and underexplored in terms of what has been covered and what has been left out (including, for instance, Trimalchio’s seeming sense of a shortened future, indicative of what Victoria Rimell has called his “guilt and self-consciousness about his previous identity”—like his modern survivor counterparts).<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, the enslaved voice that reaches us through Trimalchio’s words has been audible: this voice must be given center stage in approaching the reality of child sexual abuse in antiquity. Some three hundred years before the invention of the Petronian Trimalchio, in Plautus’s *Persa*, the *puer* Paegnium is made to say that the ongoing abuse of the pimp Dordalus was “permissible” because “his arse has been pricked often enough for years” (*licet: iam diu saepe sunt expunctae*).<sup>104</sup> Through our scholarship, we can, by contrast, contribute to a climate in which

the social attitudes that frustrated Dan's escape and recovery process no longer have a place: *non licet*—it's not permissible, as Trimalchio's "wounded child within" already articulated by speaking out.<sup>105</sup>

#### NOTES

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1. Follette, Polusny, and Milbeck 1994, 276.
2. Brewer 2004, 292–93, with S. Robertson 2005, 166–70; for Roman antiquity, see Laes 2011, 276, with Laes 2010b.
3. Bingham et al. 2016, 12, citing S. Robertson 2005.
4. Hacking 1991, 286. It was not until the twentieth century that the term "sexual abuse" became widely used, even if the concept has older roots. A brief discussion is in Jackson 2000, 2–4; for an overview of the key developments in the nineteenth century, see Coldrey 1996.
5. Bingham et al. 2016, 12; see also the argument in Laes 2010b for the need to historicize modern ideas about children's sexual personhood on the basis of the study of classical antiquity.
6. Bingham et al. 2016, 4.
7. On the modern debate, see especially Laes 2017 versus Jewell 2016, with Laes and Strubbe 2014, and Laes 2011; see also Roth 2018. For a survey of various ancient (Roman) conceptual approaches to different age categories for minors, see Laes 2011, 50–99.
8. For the most up-to-date edition of the "slave chapter" of Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices, see Salway 2010.
9. The judicial interest in the testimony of survivors is historically a recent phenomenon, which underscores the gaps in the materials available for historical study: brief discussion is in Bingham et al. 2016, 11. There were also issues over gaining parental consent to be permitted to interview the child: Burgess and Hartman 2018, 18–19. However, note also the argument by a legal practitioner, a judge in a family court in New York City, who actively seeks to put the child's testimony last in court, in part motivated by a desire to prevent the interrogation of the already traumatized child: Gallett 1989, 485–86.

10. Bingham et al. 2016, 11.

11. For earlier, sociohistorical discussion of child sexual abuse in this text, see Laes 2019, 124–26.

12. The literature on multiple readings is vast; seminal for exploring the literary interpretation of Petronius's *Satyricon* is N. W. Slater 1990, concluding (at 250) that the text is “singularly uninterpretable.”

13. P. D. Morgan 2006, 394.

14. Finley (1980) 1998, 9.

15. Coldrey 1996, 379.

16. Coldrey 1996, 376; see also Laes 2010b, 50–51, on scholarly criticism of the effects of feminism on modern approaches to sexual relations between children and adults, citing in particular Vattuone 2004, 259–91.

17. In the study of slavery, the question of the transformative capacity of society has been critically foregrounded in David Brion Davis's work, especially in his exploration of what he called “a revolution in moral perception” regarding slaving per se: 2001, 135, with (especially) 1975; on Davis's particular argument about the development of modern abolitionism, see the comments in Pleasants 2010.

18. Richlin 2015a, 355, echoing Carr 1964, 79: “historical interpretations always involve moral judgements—or, if you prefer a more neutral sounding term, value judgements.”

19. Williams 2010, 32; Bradley 1987b, 118. Regularly cited passages include Mart. 1.84, 2.33, 3.33, 4.66, 9.39, 6.71, 11.70, 12.58, and 12.96. But see also Kolendo 1981, 288: “sur cet aspect de l'esclavage nous ne disposons que de mentions peu nombreuses.” Sexual exploitation in Roman slavery was not restricted to the kind of abuse focused on in this chapter; for a brief overview (also on forced prostitution and castration), see Bradley 1987b, 116–18; Espach 2018, 49–80 (especially for male victims of sexual violence); for a brief ancient-modern comparison, see duBois 2010, 1–2, 7, 10–11; for discussion of the interplay between slavery and sexuality in late antiquity, Harper 2011, esp. 281–325.

20. Richlin 2017, esp. 105–26 (and 28 for earlier bibliography), 2015b, *passim*; Marshall 2015.

21. Kolendo 1981, 294. Other recent examples: duBois 2010, 2 (“only the voice of the master”); Bradley 1987b, 118 (“nothing is heard in conventional sources”); with particular regard to the study of sexual abuse in Roman slavery, Laes 2019, 129 (“the well-to-do . . . are the only producers of our literary sources”). Roman comedy could easily be deemed the exception that proves the rule because it has long been understood as both appealing to and being representative of a wider audience, attracting debate also on the life experiences (and related social and legal standing) of their authors. On the voice of the enslaved, see Phaedr. 3, *pr.* 33–37; note also Hopkins 1993; Bradley 2000; Oberg 2000, 118; Henderson 2001, 63–64.

22. Whoever the author(s) of the text, for chronological reasons alone I exclude Nero's courtier Petronius from the "list" of potential candidates; see Roth 2016.

23. For discussions of the depiction of sex and sexuality in the *Satyricon* as a whole, see Sullivan 1968, 232–53; Gill 1973; Richlin 2009.

24. Petron. *Sat.* 75.10–11. I explore the migratory dimension of the type of enslavement sketched by Trimalchio in Roth 2021.

25. Petron. *Sat.* 69.3. On my interpretation of the passage, and Trimalchio's punishment in the form of demotion, see Roth 2009.

26. Trimalchio's autobiography has been the subject of much discussion. Key contributions from a sociohistorical perspective are Veyne 1961; D'Arms 1981, 97–120, both responding to Rostovtzeff's (1957, I:57) elaboration of Trimalchio as "one type of [the Augustan] age." But see also still Ribbeck 1892, III:150–69, esp. 152–61; É. Thomas 1912, 140.

27. The standard view of the type (and size) of object in question is exemplified by M. S. Smith, noting that it "can refer to a tall lamp-stand, the equivalent of a standard lamp, or to a smaller type, the equivalent of a table lamp . . . often consisting of a plinth supporting a short column from whose capital several lamps hung down": 1975, §§75.10 (207), with 39.4 (88–89) and 64.10 (180). Similarly already Blümner 1911, 140–44, with figs. 39–41; see also Schmeling 2011, §§75.10 (318) and 64.10 (267). Trimalchio's morphological choice of the unusual masculine *candelabrus* over the grammatically correct neuter *candelabrum* has been understood to illustrate "the language of the common people": Boyce 1991, 47; see also Jansson's (2004, 59–76) argument for "verkehrte Sprache," and Adams 2003, 2013, 419–25.

28. Discussion of terms and varied examples are in W. J. Slater 1974; Nielsen 1990; A. J. Pomeroy 1992, 46–48; Laes 2003, 298–314, 2010a, with Richlin 2015a, 359–68; see also Skinner 2018, 49–53. See also note 32.

29. A. J. Pomeroy 1992, 50, with note 28 above; but note that Pomeroy does not cite evidence for the suggested embarrassment on the part of individuals in the role of the "infantile object." On the difficulties in verifying sexual abuse in our evidence, see also McKeown 2007.

30. Skinner 2018, 48–49.

31. Richardson 1986.

32. A. J. Pomeroy 1992, 50 (merely adding, at 51, that the reference to the *candelabrum* serves "to indicate that he was once a small boy in the household," without comment on the implications for Trimalchio's comparison between the height of the *candelabrum* and his own height when arriving from Asia).

33. A. J. Pomeroy 1992, 49. The age range of epigraphically attested *delicati/deliciae* is from a few months to the mid-twenties: Herrmann-Otto 1994, 18 and 310–12; Laes 2003, 308–9. Note also Laes's comment that age terminology referring to abused minors in the ancient evidence tends to be generally vague: 2019, 119.

34. Reeve 1985, noting earlier translators' different interpretations.

35. Bodel 1989b, 72–73.

36. Richardson 1986.

37. Dover (1978) 1989, 84–87. This does not question that younger children were also subject to sexual abuse in Roman antiquity, as maintained in Richlin 2015a, 352, stating unambiguously that “slavery enabled sexual use at any age.” See also Petron. *Sat.* 25–26, that is, the so-called marriage of Giton, involving sex with a seven-year-old girl, also roughly the age at which one of the other characters, Quartilla, claims to have already had sex; or Mart. 9.7 (8) on very young eunuchs (but see also Wiedemann 1989, 30–31). For discussion of ancient (Roman) conceptual approaches to different age categories for minors, see above, with notes 7 and 8.

38. Bielfeldt 2018, 427.

39. Note also the comment about Roman thinking in hebdomads made by A. J. Pomeroy (1992, 50–51 n. 23), fitting nicely with a change in Trimalchio’s *Life* after the age of fourteen: “given the Romans’ tendency to view the development of their lives as occurring in groups of seven years, it is not unreasonable for Trimalchio to treat his service through boyhood and youth as extending over two hebdomads.”

40. On purchasing *deliciae* at market, see W. J. Slater 1974, 133–34.

41. Walvin 2008, 151–72.

42. For modern discussion of the sexual exploitation of enslaved African American women, see Jennings 1990.

43. The case of Le Scouarnec has been well covered in the French media; the discovery of the “carnets noirs” has been central to Aubenas and Dupré 2020.

44. T. A. Foster 2011, 447–48. This is not to deny that the prohibition of what was referred to as sodomy in early America played a part in reducing the proliferation of the kind of materials that are now our sources.

45. Petron. *Sat.* 63.3. My rendering of Trimalchio’s description of his “Chian life” (*a puero uitam Chiam gessi*) seeks to give meaning to the implied counterpositioning between himself and the deceased, by then abused *delicatus*. A parallel to this may be seen in the differentiated introduction of the *capillati* at *Sat.* 27.1 vis-à-vis Trimalchio’s *deliciae* at *Sat.* 28.4.

46. A. J. Pomeroy 1992, 50 n. 21.

47. A good overview is in Schmeling 2011, ad loc. (260–61).

48. M. S. Smith 1975, ad loc. (176), with Schmeling 2011, ad loc. (261).

49. Petron. *Sat.* 27.1: *uidemus senem caluum, tunica uestitum russea, inter pueros capillatos ludentem pila. nec tam pueri nos, quanquam erat operae pretium*. Encolpius’s reaction to the attractive appearance of the *pueri* may perhaps better be seen in the context of homosexuality than of pederasty (in the modern sense); Richlin 1993 makes the broader case.

50. Schmeling 2011, ad loc. (87).

51. Petron. *Sat.* 27.1, 29.3, 34.4, 70.8. Schmeling sums up the standard discussion on the practice: 2011, ad loc. (288); see also Courtney 2001, 8–9.

52. So explained by A. J. Pomeroy (1992, 50 n. 22): “but the particular use of the construction [*ad delicias*] in such examples as *ad ualetudinem* (CIL VI 9085) and *ad manum* (CIL VI 9523, for the more usual *a manu*) suggests that Trimalchio is giving his task a semi-official status in his master’s household.”

53. “Grooming” is even more modern as a concept than “sexual abuse” and has attracted a range of cognate meanings: Burgess and Hartman 2018 date it to the 1970s. I use the term in the basic sense of describing behaviors “during the preparatory stage of sexual abuse”: McAlinden 2006, 339.

54. M. S. Smith 1975, ad loc. (54) stresses Trimalchio’s characterization through the ball game as immature. The element of play and tease resurfaces in several other sources: for example, Mart. 11.58, with McKeown’s (2007, 60) insistence that the enslaved had no ultimate power in the “game.”

55. Petron. *Sat.* 41.8.

56. See C. A. Williams 2010, 24, on adolescent hair-growing in this context, and Pollini 2003 for visual representations of *deliciae*. See also Sen. *Ep.* 47.7, on forced hair removal of a sexually abused enslaved adolescent, otherwise regularly associated with the practices of traders and dealers: for example, Plin. *HN* 30.13.41 and 32.47.135 (with 21.97.170); Suet. *Aug.* 68. For the context, see Plut. *Mor.* 770B–C, citing Bion.

57. Richardson 1986. This perspective challenges the idea, argued in Panayotakis 2019, that the repercussions of (physical) beauty are constructed differently in the *Satyricon* for the enslaved from those experienced by the free, for whom it is “normally problematic” (200).

58. Petron. *Sat.* 74.8 (*puer non inspeciosus*), 28.4 (Croesus; with 64.5–11). Note the argument on the medical condition potentially responsible for Croesus’s aged appearance in Lowe 2012; see Panayotakis 2019, 193–94, for a contextualization of Croesus’s appearance as a special attraction.

59. See Petersmann 1977, 98–100, with further reference also to Petron. *Sat.* 42.5 and 44.2.

60. Trimalchio is introduced as *senem caluum* (to contrast the surrounding *capillati*): Petron. *Sat.* 27.1. The suggested reading gains momentum if Trimalchio’s *fui* is seen in context with the (similar) Plautine usage to signify an enslaved person’s former life (in this case, in freedom) in the *Persa*: 636–38; note also the overlap in the stress on the adversative *tamen* (639 and 640) and the woman’s silence, commented on by Dordalus (641: *quid taces?*). Discussion of the different “speaking” modes of the enslaved (in Roman comedy), including silence, is in Richlin 2017, 311–50.

61. Similarly Plaut. *Cas.* 466.

62. Bradley 1987b, 118; recently rehearsed in Hunt 2018, 109, with explicit reference to Trimalchio. The seeming rationale is summed up in George 2013, 169, by reference to “the potential advantages of willing submission to a slave owner’s sexual advances.” For discussion of Trimalchio’s sexual abuse as “preferential treatment” (at the hands of the *dominus*), see Bodet 1989a, 231; similarly Slater 1990, 79, who speaks of Trimalchio

unreservedly as the “favorite of both master and mistress.” See also Edmondson 2011, 350–51. Note furthermore the similarity to earlier approaches, illustrated for instance by Prescott’s appreciation of *pueri delicati* in Plautine comedy, whom he describes as “a special type of handsome young voluptuaries . . . who are on intimate terms with their masters” (1920, 261).

63. Courtney 2001, 77; also Sullivan 1968, 235; C. A. Williams 2010, 32.

64. “Annie,” like all other names mentioned in what follows, are pseudonymous, chosen to protect the individuals’ identities. All information about Annie and the quotations about her life are from Davey 2016.

65. Kavanagh 2018.

66. Overviews are in ACOG 2011, 1–2; Hall and Hall 2011, 2–4.

67. On the consequences of sexual abuse on boys (and men) in particular, see RAINN n.d.

68. Dan’s and David’s stories have been made available by Vera House, see Dan n.d. and David n.d.

69. Dan n.d.

70. Discussion and examples of an explicit nature are in C. A. Williams 2010, 15–49.

71. Likewise Petron. *Sat.* 69.3.

72. The confessional character of the *Satyricon* has been foregrounded in Schmelting 2018.

73. Petron. *Sat.* 45.8.

74. Bielfeldt 2018, 428; note also Bielfeldt’s acute comments on the “gender-switch” of the candelabrum (to *candelabrus*); see also the comments in note 27.

75. Reminiscent of Suetonius’s account of Asiaticus’s attempts to escape and prevent his ongoing abuse by Emperor Vitellius: *Vit.* 12. See also the comments in note 82.

76. Bodel 1989a, 224.

77. Bodel 1989a, 224. See also Plaut. *Pseud.* 783 for the abused’s focus on size.

78. Bodel 1989a, 224 n. 2.

79. For example, *Dig.* 23.1.9 (Ulpian); 23.2.4 (Pomponius). In antiquity, the end of childhood was generally conceptualized as occurring in what we call the early teens: Laes 2011, 77–99; for the modern debate, see above, with the contributions listed in note 7.

80. Actual marriage ages appear to have been noticeably later for males, and probably somewhat for girls; Scheidel 2007, with discussion of earlier bibliography. Marriage and an individual’s first engagement in sexual activity need not coincide, of course, especially in the case of men.

81. Bodel 1989, 224. I see a similar critique in Seneca’s description of sexually abused enslaved adolescents as “luckless boys” (*puerorum infelicium*), and the full acknowledgment of their attempt to escape from the ordeal: *Sen. Ep.* 95.24; but see also *Sen. Controv.* 4 pref. 10. See also the example given in note 75.

82. Vattuone 2004, 247 n. 42, regarding *Anth. Pal.* 12.211, stressing also the element of play in the relationship (for which see above, with note 54). The lack of due engagement with slavery in Vattuone's discussion has been noted by Laes 2010b, 51–52.

83. See also Winkler's identification of the *Life of Aesop* as a popular critique of Roman elite pretensions, 1985, 279–91.

84. There is considerable debate over what has been called the victim-offender cycle. Studies that suggest that sexual abuse in childhood is a risk factor for becoming an abuser also identify other risk factors, such as issues over social contact and familial support especially during childhood. See Glasser et al. 2001 (with the responses at 495–97); Lambie et al. 2002.

85. Rahman 2016.

86. Commented on also by Annie (Davey 2016): "Supporters need to know the way you say things has the potential to horribly damage a survivor who is already struggling under the weight of coming forward." The emphasis in work with enslaved children and forced laborers in the modern world is now generally on their own agency in telling their story. See Bales and Trodd 2008; K. L. Johnson 2017. See also the Truth Project of the UK's Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse at <https://www.truthproject.org.uk/i-will-be-heard/>.

87. The necessary transformation also pertains to the specialized services, given that survivors report that many professionals "don't ask the right questions because they don't know how to handle the response." Roberts 2019.

88. On the relevant discourse in contemporary Great Britain, see Lovett, Coy, and Kelly 2018.

89. P. D. Morgan 2006, 395.

90. W. Johnson 2003, 115. In the context of black slavery studies, Johnson also identified agency as "a 'white' form of address which originally served the purpose of admitting the speaker to a 'Black' conversation" but subsequently served "to make ourselves feel better and more righteous rather than to make the world better or more righteous." W. Johnson 2003, 120–21.

91. The same perspective is found (inter alia) in Plautine comedy, such as in the *Truculentus* (822, outing the rapist). This is not to disregard Marshall's interpretation of the survivor's bonding and alignment with the abuser as "a necessary, defensive, survival response for the sex slave" and "a rational and moral choice" in often desperate circumstances (2013, 193–94).

92. See also Levin-Richardson's 2013 argument in her study of the agency of female sex workers in ancient Pompeii that subjection and subjecthood need not be incompatible dimensions in the lived experiences of the sexually exploited in the Roman world (including discussion of nonliterary texts in the form of graffiti).

93. So already Ribbeck 1892, 151–53: "ein Zeit- und Charakterbild."

94. Bodet 1994, 252–53; restated in Andreau 2009, 114, and R. MacLean 2018, 25, 73–74, and 81.

95. The significance of fear (besides the actual occurrence of, say, abuse) in the social control mechanisms in Roman slavery has been highlighted in Bradley 1987b, 113–37, and is strikingly staged in Plaut. *Persa* 361–64.

96. For example, Martin 2000, esp. 156–59, with Ratti 2015. Given that the *Satyricon* mocks Pliny's epistolary writing and the views propagated through it (see Roth 2016), the presented thought experiment involving Encolpius does not see him in the role of one of Pliny's "hands," that is, as a detachable, physical extension of Pliny-the-*dominus* and author. For discussion of Pliny's "extended" body and "dispersed" authorial mind, see Blake 2016.

97. The model was known in antiquity. Aulus Gellius (*NA* 2.18) notes that the philosopher Phaedon of Elis was thought by some to have been sexually exploited by his (former) enslaver, before being philosophically educated when purchased by Cebes.

98. Wiedemann 1981, 10.

99. ACOG 2011, 392; see also Hall and Hall 2011, 1.

100. N. W. Slater 1990, 79.

101. The same problems arise in the study of homosexuality. Clarke 1998, 82–90.

102. Marshall 2013, esp. 179 and 194–96.

103. Rimell 2002, 184.

104. Plaut. *Persa* 848 (trans. De Melo).

105. Laes's proposition to "avoid too strong moral, present-minded, and ahistorical condemnations" is off target; 2003, 320; see also Laes 2011, 290, with the critique of Richlin 2015a, 354–55. Similarly, one of the anonymous readers objected to my declared modern goal on the grounds of an apparent link between "cover-ups of child molestation" and the fact that "child molesters are held in such strong and almost universal loathing." But contributing to an environment in which victims of child sexual abuse may declare is not the same as creating a loathsome image of abusers.