

## BELLARIA (XIX)



No image of Martial exists. We shall therefore content ourselves with this wonderful 'Fayum mummy portrait', 2nd c AD, Object #ECM.1473-2010, Myers Collection, Eton College – the wood painted portraits were discovered in the Roman Egyptian Al Fayyum Oasis, buried with their mummified subjects.

## MARTIAL (4)

**Apologies** in advance for the doggerel (per)versions. Prose translations of Martial don't do it for me.

### Metre

Martial's poems are predominantly composed in elegiac couplets.

The second most common is the hendecasyllable, which I give here in a brief, simplified, rhythmical version (x ['blank'] = long or short):

x x / — U U — U — / U — — (blank blank / tum ti ti tum ti tum / ti tum tum)

e.g. 'Oh you / chorus of indolent / reviewers'

### Life in Rome

Martial mentions nearly fifty jobs of one sort or another—from actors, advocates, architects and astrologers through executioners and gladiators to teachers, snake-keepers and undertakers. There was also plenty of work for builders provided by the emperor Domitian, and Martial was not about to miss the chance to win favour with him by mentioning it.

Titus's Colosseum had been the Flavian emperors' biggest single project, but the ruthlessly efficient Domitian, who saw himself as a second Augustus, instituted a massive building programme across Rome, restoring or putting up temples, arches, an odeion, a stadium, theatres, baths, a fourth level to the Colosseum and much, much more.



Domitian's stadium

Here Martial enthuses over Domitian's top street-widening programme:

### Widening the streets

Brash shopkeepers had taken all the city,  
     no shopfront kept within its proper seat.  
 Domitian ordered narrow lanes to widen,  
     and what was once track to become a street.  
 No vintner's column's hung with wine-filled flagons,                     5  
     no praetor's forced to fight through muddy places,  
 no barber's blade's drawn blindly in dense crowds,  
     no grimy cook-shop fills up all the spaces,  
 And pub, cook, butcher, barber self-restrain.  
     That massive supermarket's Rome again!                             10  
*abstulerat totam temerarius institor urbem*  
     *inque suo nullum limine limen erat.*  
*iussisti tenuis, Germanice, crescere uicos,*  
     *et modo quae fuerat semita, facta uia est.*  
*nulla catenatis pila est praecinctorum lagonis,*                     5  
     *nec praetor medio cogitur ire luto,*  
*stringitur in densa nec caeca nouacula turba*  
     *occupat aut totas nigra popina uias.*  
*tonsor, copo, cocus, lanius sua limina seruant.*  
     *nunc Roma est, nuper magna taberna fuit.*                             10

## Schools

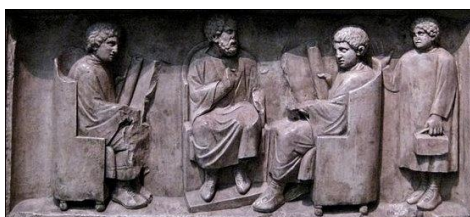
Early education was infamous for its brutality. One of Martial's poems begs schoolmasters to give citizens a bit of peace by laying off the floggings at unseemly hours. Here Martial offers a different, seasonal take on the matter. The last sentence is suggestive: summer in Rome was not only very hot, it was also dangerous (ll.11-12). Malaria, the major killer, thrived in that weather:

Master, spare your artless long-haired flock.  
So will they come in crowds to learn from you,  
and treasure you—young chorus at your desk—  
teaching shorthand and maths:† none will outdo  
the pupil numbers that you gather round. 5  
The skies in flaming summer glow white-hot  
and roasted harvests cook throughout July:  
Lay off the gruesome Scythian fringed knot  
That thrashed Marsyas,‡ and the tearful canes—  
The pedagogues' sceptre:‡ all that horrid stuff 10  
Can sleep sound till October first. If boys  
Stay well in summertime, they learn enough.  
†i.e. arithmetic; in Latin the shorthand is called *uelox*, 'speedy'  
‡he challenged Apollo to a music contest and was flogged to death  
‡ a sort of rod of office, usually symbolising e.g. regal authority  
*ludi magister, parce simplici turbae:*  
*sic te frequentes audiant capillati*  
*et delicatae diligat chorus mensae,*  
*nec calculator nec notarius uelox*  
*maiore quisquam circulo coronetur.* 5  
*albae Leone† flammeo calent luces*  
*tostamque feruens Iulius coquit messem.*  
*cirrata loris horridis Scythae pellis,*  
*qua uapulauit Marsyas Celaenaeus,‡*  
*ferulaeque tristes, sceptrum paedagogorum,* 10  
*cessent et Idus dormiant in Octobres:*  
*aestate pueri si ualent, satis discunt.*

† Leo, sign of the Zodiac (July-August)

‡ from Celaenae, a town in Phrygia

### 10.62



Roman school (2nd C AD, Neumagen)

## Hermes, the gladiator



Hermes, a gladiator from Libya

Many gladiators assumed dramatic names, and here Martial lists the qualities that made Hermes a fearsome opponent, even for gladiators like Helius (l.5) and Advolans (l.6). He is master of at least *three* different styles of fighting (ll.11-13, cf. 2), He brings in the crowds (l.9), especially the women (l.10) who were always assumed to lust after these devil-dare musclemen:

Hermes, warlike darling of his age,  
Hermes, skilled in every martial tool,  
Hermes, gladiator, trainer too,  
Hermes, tornado, earthquake of his school,  
Hermes, the only one that Helius fears, 5  
Hermes, by whom alone Advolans is outfaced,  
Hermes, always winning, without wounding,  
Hermes, impossible to be replaced,  
Hermes, cashcow for the ticket touts,  
Hermes, women's passion (how they fret!) 10  
Hermes, king of the mighty battle spear,  
Hermes, with sea-trident also a threat,  
Hermes, in helmet† holding fearful sway,  
Hermes, glory of Mars in every way,  
Hermes, in all things on his own, thrice one—‡ 15

Hooray!

†typical of the 'Samnite' gladiator

‡this has no religious significance: he alone is the top man, as one who can fight in three modes

*Hermes Martia saeculi uoluptas,  
 Hermes omnibus eruditus armis,  
 Hermes et gladiator et magister,  
 Hermes turbo sui tremorque ludi,  
 Hermes, quem timet Helius, sed unum, 5  
 Hermes, cui cadit Aduolans, sed uni,  
 Hermes uincere nec ferire doctus,  
 Hermes subpositicius sibi ipse,  
 Hermes diuitiae locariorum,  
 Hermes cura laborque ludiarum, 10  
 Hermes belligera superbus hasta,  
 Hermes aequoreo minax tridente,  
 Hermes casside languida timendus,  
 Hermes gloria Martis uniuersi,  
 Hermes omnia solus et ter unus. 15*

#### 5.24

### Small farmer



Roman hoe-blade (Chicago)

Farming was the default way of life in the ancient world, the only way to survive for the vast bulk of the population. Since the man in this poem has heirs, he is not a tenant farmer but a small-holder.

It is typical to ask the earth to lie lightly on the deceased. Here it is doubly true, because as a little guy, he must have found all earth-working extremely ‘heavy’ (*grauis*), which also means ‘oppressive’:

Heirs, this farmer’s much too small: don’t lay him underground.  
 The earth, however little, will make too heavy a mound.  
*heredes, nolite breuem sepelire colonum:  
 nam terra est illi quantulacumque grauis.*

#### 11.14

## Doctors

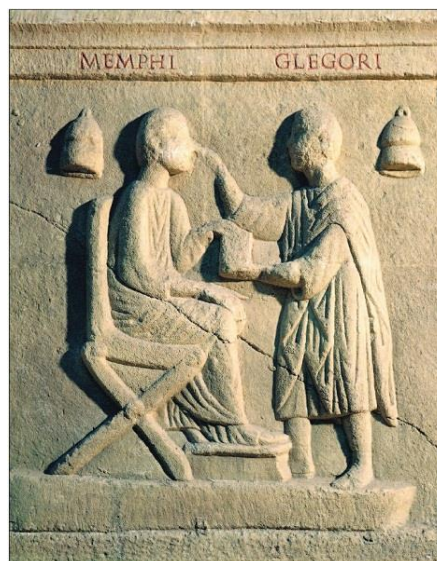
Doctors were easy meat for satire: they knew virtually nothing about how the body actually worked or what made it ill (germs and viruses are a late 19th C discovery), and the absence of anaesthetics when it came to wielding the knife (red-hot irons dealt with piles) did not exactly increase their popularity:

### Symmachus

I was ill: but you came straightaway to see me,  
And with a hundred pupils, Symmachus, too.  
A hundred wind-chapped hands were laid upon me.  
I didn't have a fever: now I do.

*languēbam: sed tu comitatus protinus ad me  
uenisti centum, Symmache, discipulis.  
centum me tetigere manus aquilone gelatae:  
non habui febrem, Symmache, nunc habeo.*

5.9



Medical eye inspection

### Diaulus

Doctor Diaulus changed his trade:  
He's an undertaker now.  
He's started practising medicine†  
The only way he knew how.

†the Latin is *clanicus*, lit. 'one who lies you down'. It derives from Greek *klinê*, 'bed, bier'!  
*chirurgus fuerat, nunc est uispillo Diaulus:  
coepit quo poterat clanicus esse modo.*

1.30

## Legacy hunting

Many authors satirized this exploitative practice. Horace imagined an impoverished Odysseus consulting the prophet Teiresias in the underworld about how to return home to Penelope after all these years without a bean to his name. Teiresias suggests he seek out the old, rich, frail and childless, make himself indispensable to them and get written into their will as heir. If they are writers, praise their work; if they are lechers, offer the wife ('What! Faithful Penelope?' protests Odysseus. 'No problem,' says Teiresias, 'one taste of the cash and she'll be like a dog with a juicy bone'). If they are women, become their gigolo. And if Odysseus succeeds, he must lay on a magnificent funeral at which he is a picture of misery ready for the next victim.

Here Martial tries his hand at the theme. Chloe kills off her husbands; Gemellus hopes to marry a rich woman with a fatal illness:

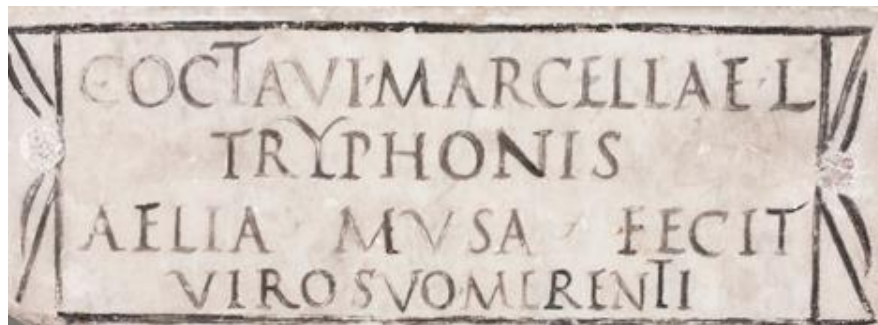
### Chloe at work

On the tombs of her seven husbands, evil Chloe wrote the claim  
'This work was carried out by me': † could anything be more  
[plain?

†i.e. a common assertion made on tombs, but not quite in Martial's sense...

*inscripsit tumulis septem scelerata uirorum  
'se fecisse' Chloe. Quid pote simplicius?*

### 9.15



'[The tomb of] Caius Octavius Tryphon, freedman [L] of Marcella. Aelia Musa made it for her deserving husband'

### A cough

Gemellus, Maronilla faine  
would have unto his wife:  
He longs, he likes, he loves, he craves,  
with her to leade his life.  
What? is she of suche beautie brave?  
naie none more foule maie be:  
What then is in her to be likte  
or lovd? still cougheth she. †

†indicating she has consumption (tuberculosis)  
*petit Gemellus nuptias Maronillae  
et cupit et instat et precatur et donat.  
adeone pulchra est? immo foedius nil est.  
quid ergo in illa petitur et placet? tussit.*

1.10

Timothy Kendall (1577)

### Give me the money!

You'd have me call you kind, Gargilianus,  
for sending gifts to widows and old men?  
No one is viler, more obscene than you,  
who dare to call your ruses 'presents' when  
they're like sly hooks cajoling greedy fish, 5  
like baits that trap dumb beasts through trickery.  
If you can't tell a gift from *quid pro quo*,  
I'll teach you how they differ: give to me.  
*munera quod senibus uiduisque ingentia mittis,  
uis te munificum, Gargiliane, uocem?  
sordidius nihil est, nihil est te spurcius uno,  
qui potes insidias dona uocare tuas:  
sic auidis fallax indulget piscibus hamus, 5  
callida sic stultas decipit esca feras.  
quid sit largiri, quid sit donare docebo,  
si nescis: dona, Gargiliane, mihi.*

4.56

Susan McLeant†

### Oratory

The main purpose of Roman education was practical—to prepare men for a life in law and politics. One training technique was to argue about the rights and wrongs of men's decisions, drawn from history—as below, great families, battles and so on: such *exempla* could then prove useful in the courtroom (Romans greatly respected ancient examples of how, and how not, to behave). But it did rather depend on the case in hand...





Roman bronze goat

### The Billygoats Three

I've taken my case to the courts,  
Not for poison, assault or murder,  
But simply because three goats  
Have been stolen, I claim, by a neighbour.

The judge wants the case to be proved.

5

But *you* are declaiming on Carrhae,  
And the war against Mithradates  
And Sullas, Mucii and Marii,  
And raging Punic treachery,  
Shouting, gesturing frenziedly...

Postumus, get to the Billygoats Three.

*non de ui neque caede nec ueneno,*

*sed lis est mihi de tribus capellis:*

*uicini queror has abesse furto.*

*hoc iudex sibi postulat probari:*

*tu Carrhas Mithridaticumque bellum*

5

*et periuria Punici furoris*

*et Sullas Mariosque Muciosque*

*magna uoce sonas manuque tota.*

*iam dic, Postume, de tribus capellis.*

**6.19**



Egyptian water-clock

### Thirsty work

Loudly ordering seven clepsydras†

- the judge unwillingly conceded -

Head back, gulping jars of water,

You banged on far more than you needed.

We ask, to satisfy your voice and thirst's desire,

5

That you drink, Caecilianus, from the clepsydra.

†the water clock used for timing the speeches by both sides

*septem clepsydras magna tibi uoce petenti*

*arbiter inuitus, Caeciliane, dedit.*

*at tu multa diu dicis uitreisque tepentem*

*ampullis potas semisupinus aquam.*

*ut tandem saties uocemque sitimque, rogamus*

5

*iam de clepsydra, Caeciliane, bibas.*

6.35

### Slave for auction

The public *praeco* was an official, associated with different *magistratus*, who helped them run and control large authorized assemblies. They were also involved with the sale of state property, e.g. the spoils of war, slaves, assets of debtors and so on. This was a respectable position.

Then there were private *praecones* who were basically hucksters and sharpsters, known for their quick wit and ability to hold a crowd, who would sell anything for anyone in the street corners and alleyways of Rome, taking commission and doubtless backhanders on the way and often becoming wealthy in the process. Such 'middlemen' were generally despised by the élite. Martial, Juvenal and Cicero among others all took pot-shots at them:



Slave for sale (Henryk Siemiradzki)

When Gellianus the auctioneer was selling  
a girl just now, of none-too-good report,  
the kind who sits in the middle of Subura,†  
for quite a while the bids had fallen short.  
Wanting to prove that she was clean, he pulled 5  
her near, against her will,‡ and kissed her two,  
three, four times. What resulted from that kissing?  
One who'd just bid six hundred then withdrew.

†A crowded, low-class area of Rome  
‡the girl, though a whore, is revolted at the prospect of being kissed by an auctioneer  
*famae non nimium bonae puellam,  
quales in media sedent Subura,  
uendebat modo praeco Gellianus.  
paruo cum pretio diu liceret,  
dum puram cupit adprobare cunctis, 5  
adtraxit prope se manu negantem  
et bis terque quaterque basiauit.  
quid profecerit osculo, requiris?  
sescentos modo qui dabat, negavit.*

6.66

Susan McLeant

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