

**Eduqas Support Materials:  
Notes and Commentary**

**Eduqas GCSE Latin  
Component 2**

**Latin Literature and Sources (Themes)  
Theme B: Come Dine with Me**

**For examination in 2027–2029**

## **Acknowledgements – Images**

Figure 1: Food preparation, fresco from a Vesuviun town. Photo credit: Alex Ramsey Alamy ID: AN8FNW.

Figure 2: Roman food warmer 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD Pompeii. Photo credit: Sarah Thomasson, Hellene School Travel.

Figure 3: Garum amphora from Pompeii 1st cent AD. Photo credit: James Heath, Hellene School Travel.

Figure 4: Fresco of a fruit bowl from the Praedia of Julia Felix, Pompeii. Photo credit: Samuel Magal Alamy ID: CEKYKP

Figure 5: Roman Banquet, House of the Triclinium, Pompeii. Photo credit: Tyler Bell.

Figure 6: Distribution of Bread, Pompeii, AD 79. Photo Credit: Azoor Photo Alamy ID: PGHEE6.

Figure 7: Mosaic of Roman food items. Photo credit: Giorgio Morara (Alamy ID: 2EWMFW4)

Figure 8: Reconstruction of a Roman dining room (triclinium). Photo credit: Skimage (Alamy ID: 2JT3852).

Figure 9: Silver tableware of the sort Trimalchio might have had. Photo credit: Artokoloro / Penta Springs Limited (Alamy ID: KCC79P)

Figure 10 – Roman glass jug from the 1st Century CE. Photo credit: Alamy ID: 2AHTENT

Figure 11 – image of a lamprey. Photo credit: blickwinkel (Alamy ID: A7PKPA)

Figure 12: Coin with Augustus on one side and Vedius Pollio on the other. Photo credit: [www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com)

## Acknowledgements - Texts

<p><b>AULUS GELLIUS</b>, <i>Attic Nights</i>, 2.24 Perseus Digital Library: <a href="https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0071:id=v1.p.202">https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2007.01.0071:id=v1.p.202</a> The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius. With An English Translation. John C. Rolfe. Cambridge. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd. 1927.</p>
<p><b>JUVENAL</b>, <i>Satire</i> 11 64-80, 82-85 The Latin Library <a href="https://thelatinlibrary.com/juvenal/11.shtml">https://thelatinlibrary.com/juvenal/11.shtml</a></p>
<p><b>MARTIAL</b>, <i>Epigrams</i> 3.60 Perseus Digital Library: <a href="https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0506%3Abook%3D3%3Apoem%3D60">https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0506%3Abook%3D3%3Apoem%3D60</a> M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton libri / recognovit W. Heraeus. Martial. Wilhelm Heraeus. Jacobus Borovskij. Leipzig. 1925/1976.</p>
<p><b>OVID</b>, <i>Metamorphoses</i> 1, 221- 239 Perseus Digital Library: <a href="https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0029%3Abook%3D1%3Acard%3D163">https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0029%3Abook%3D1%3Acard%3D163</a> Ovid. <i>Metamorphoses</i>. Hugo Magnus. Gotha (Germany). Friedr. Andr. Perthes. 1892</p>
<p><b>OVID</b>, <i>Metamorphoses</i> 8, 664-688 Perseus Digital Library: <a href="https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0029%3Abook%3D8%3Acard%3D1">https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0029%3Abook%3D8%3Acard%3D1</a> Ovid. <i>Metamorphoses</i>. Hugo Magnus. Gotha (Germany). Friedr. Andr. Perthes. 1892</p>
<p><b>PETRONIUS</b>, <i>cena Trimalchionis</i>, 31-34 Perseus Digital Library: <a href="https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0001%3Atext%3DSatyricon%3Asection%3D31">https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0001%3Atext%3DSatyricon%3Asection%3D31</a> Petronius Arbiter. Petronius. Michael Heseltine. London. William Heinemann. 1913</p>
<p><b>PLINY</b>, <i>Letters</i>, 2.6 Perseus Digital Library: <a href="https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0139%3Abook%3D2%3Aletter%3D6%3Asection%3D1">https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0139%3Abook%3D2%3Aletter%3D6%3Asection%3D1</a> This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 United States License.</p>
<p><b>SENECA</b>, <i>de clementia</i> 1.18 Perseus Digital Library: <a href="https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0015%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D18">https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0015%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D18</a> L. Annaeus Seneca. <i>Moral Essays: volume 1</i>. John W. Basore. London and New York. Heinemann. 1928</p>

## NOTES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

### A note on the use of these resources

The notes and commentaries presented here have been designed to support both teachers in preparing their students for Eduqas GCSE Latin, component 2, and potentially the learners themselves during their initial reading and subsequent revision. The extent to which these notes are made available to the learners is left to the individual preference of the teacher: there is no expectation that all or even some of these notes need to be learned. The examination requires no knowledge outside the text except when it is needed in order to understand the sources and texts.

The notes will provide help with linguistic complexities, which should be of particular assistance to those teachers new to Latin Literature. Learners may also find such notes helpful, though they will not be required to comment in the examination on matters of syntax or grammar, unless they are relevant to the discussion of a particular stylistic feature that the learner may choose to comment upon. If an examination question does ask for discussion of the language of a piece of Latin, there is no expectation that an answer will include comments on syntax, but rather choice of words and word order, along with any wordplay.

The notes will also cover contextual matters, which are considered helpful for the development of a full understanding of any references to people, places and events that are not immediately contextualised. Because the passages are all discrete and usually plunge in medias res, each one requires a substantial introduction and detailed comments to enable teachers and learners to grasp the full context.

Finally, the notes will mention important stylistic features, since the examination will test learners' ability to handle these in a meaningful way. It is important to point out that there will be no attempt to include every instance of alliteration or other minor stylistic devices; the expectation is that students will be encouraged to identify and evaluate these for themselves as they encounter them during their reading.

The notes for each section will conclude with a series of questions on context and style, which may be used by the teacher. Their aim is to test the student's understanding and appreciation of what has been read, while at the same time giving practice in handling the sort of questions that will be encountered in the examination.

## Theme B: **Come Dine with Me!**

Candidates are expected to be familiar with the following aspects of the theme:

- the kind of foods eaten in wealthy households and in poorer households
- the importance of hospitality
- food as a way to display wealth and power.

Candidates will be expected to answer questions on the following texts:

Aulus Gellius	Roman Thrift	<i>Attic Nights</i> 2.24
Juvenal	An Old-Fashioned Meal	<i>Satire</i> 11. 64-80
Martial	A Change of Status is Not Acknowledged	<i>Epigrams</i> 3.60
Ovid	A Gruesome Taste Test Goes Wrong	<i>Metamorphoses</i> 1. 220-232, 236-239
Ovid	Good Hospitality	<i>Metamorphoses</i> 8. 664-688
Petronius	A Host Displays His Wealth	<i>Cena Trimalchionis</i> 31-34 (adapted)
Pliny	How Not to Treat Your Guests	<i>Letters</i> 2.6
Seneca	A Meal for the Lampreys	<i>de Clementia</i> 1.18

Candidates should also study the following pictures, one or more of which will be used as a basis for questions in each question paper.

Eduqas has prepared a Resource Booklet containing the prescribed pictures and texts, together with a list giving the meanings of all the Latin vocabulary used in the texts. To assist with preparation for the examination, this booklet is available to be downloaded from the Eduqas website. In the examination itself a copy of the Booklet (omitting the captions to the pictures) will be provided to each candidate.

## Introduction

All but one of these extracts describe *cenae* — dinners or dinner parties; the exception is the Aulus Gellius passage, which lists and describes a number of sumptuary laws passed at various times in Roman history. How far the meals described by the other writers were limited by these laws is an interesting topic for speculation; unfortunately, since the precise terms of the laws are not known, and because the costs of food and drink at different times are equally obscure, it is probably impossible to reach a conclusion. Two of the pieces, written perhaps in the same decade, describe a meal where different qualities of food and wine are provided for different classes of guest, and it is interesting to compare these. The other two describe very different meals: Juvenal provides a meal that is plain but wholesome; while Petronius imagines a dinner at the furthest extremes of extravagance.

### Source 1

Fresco showing meal preparation. Two men prepare the carcass of a small calf or fawn. To the right is a large silver vessel with handles in the shape of goats' heads. Placed on a pillar to the left is a silver tray with garlic and other foodstuffs. A large wooden bowl rests on the floor. This sort of scene from everyday life is rarely found in villa decoration. The fresco may have adorned a tavern rather than a home.



Figure 1 Food preparation, fresco from a Vesuvian town c. AD 79

Frescoes were very popular wall decorations in the Roman world. The link below explains how these paintings were done.

<https://www.britannica.com/art/fresco-painting>

### Source 2



Figure 2 Roman food warmer 1st cent. AD Pompeii

A decorated bronze Roman food warmer, raised on supports so a fire can be lit below. 1st cent AD Pompeii.

Roman kitchens may have been some way from the triclinium (dining room) or may have been too small to keep the large amounts of food needed for a dinner party such as Pliny's or Trimalchio's. A warming vessel such as this, which is attractive to look at as well as practical, could have been placed in the triclinium for enslaved people to serve the guests from, it would also serve to heat the room or garden in which the dinner was being held.

### Source 3



A 'Flower of Garum' jug with the label: 'From the workshop of Aulus Umbricius Scaurus. (G(ari) F(los) SCOM(bri) SCAURI EX OFFI(ci)NA SCAURI), found in the villa of Scaurus in Pompeii. (SCOM is an abbreviation of *scomber*, meaning mackerel, which was the basis of this garum).

Scaurus was a manufacturer and merchant of garum and liquamen (fermented fish sauce), popular elements of Roman cookery. He was trading from c. AD 25-35 to AD 79. It is believed that A. Umbricius Scaurus was Pompeii's leading fish sauce manufacturer. His products were traded in the first century and amphorae bearing his name have been found at various sites across the Mediterranean. His extensive villa and family tomb in Pompeii have been found and almost one third of fish sauce jars found in Pompeii and Herculaneum have his name on them, suggesting he was very successful.

Figure 3 Garum amphora from Pompeii  
1st cent AD

### Source 4



Fresco from the Praedia (estate) of Julia Felix in Pompeii showing a glass bowl of apples, grapes and pomegranates, a jar of wine and a jar of raisins.

Romans often ate fruit as a dessert course, they seemed to prefer sweet fruit which was usually served with honeyed wine (*mulsum*).

Figure 4 Fresco of a fruit bowl from the Praedia of Julia Felix, Pompeii

## Source 5



Figure 5 Roman Banquet, House of the Triclinium, Pompeii.

Diners at a Roman banquet with an enslaved boy in attendance, House of the Triclinium, Pompeii.

Roman diners reclined on couches around a table on which the food would be placed. It seems that much of it was cut into small pieces to make it easier to eat with their fingers.

Three couches - *summus* (top), *medius* (middle) and *imus* (bottom) - were arranged around the table. Trimalchio seems to have kept the top place on the *summus* couch for himself according to the new custom (*novo more*) rather than the more usual *imus* couch, as the host was expected to show respect to his guests.

The link below gives more information about Roman dinner parties.

<https://swheritage.org.uk/avalon-archaeology/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2023/05/6.-Roman-Dinner-Parties.pdf>

## Source 6



Figure 6 Distribution of Bread, Pompeii, AD 79

Fresco from Pompeii c. AD 79

There are varying opinions as to what this shows. It may be a baker selling bread to customers or perhaps a politician distributing bread to potential voters – note the whitened toga (*toga candidata*) worn by the figure handing over the bread.

Either way, the bakery seems to have been quite large as there are numerous loaves piled up around the central figure.

Round loaves, marked into sections to make them easier to tear apart by hand, can be seen in carbonised form amongst the artefacts discovered in Pompeii.

## Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 2.24

### Roman Thrift

#### Introduction

Little is known of the life of Aulus Gellius. He was probably born in the 120s AD and received a good education. As far as his career is concerned, we know that he served as a judge in a minor court for an unknown period. Later in his life he spent around a year in Athens and its neighbourhood; his enjoyment of this visit caused him to name the one and only work that we know of, *Attic Nights* (Attica is the name of the areas around Athens).

The *Attic Nights* is a compilation, originally in twenty books (nearly all have survived), of wide-ranging anecdotes dealing with people he had met who were influential in academic subjects. He interwove amongst these anecdotes extracts from Greek and Latin literature. He valued in particular what to him was ancient literature, extending until the age of Augustus. The work is a valuable source of otherwise-lost information.

The prescribed piece is concerned with various attempts through Roman history to set limits to expenditure, the aim being to curtail extravagance. These attempts took the form of Sumptuary Laws, each of which was known by the name of the magistrate responsible for its enactment. The prescribed passage includes about a quarter of the whole list.

#### Commentary

**1 parsimonia:** the key word, as the whole essay is devoted to the various attempts to enforce this; it is the subject of the distant verb *custodita est*.

**apud veteres Romanos:** in the eyes of Gellius, all Romans up to Augustus and beyond would have been seen as 'ancient'.

**1-2 victūs atque cenarum tenuitas:** *tenuitas* is normally used to indicate thinness or smallness, and so here 'frugality'. *victus* could include any of the necessities of life, but most editors limit the meaning here to 'food', as the essay as a whole focuses on that. The two genitives (*victūs* and *cenarum*) are objective.

**2 domestica ... observatio:** 'by domestic watchfulness', i.e. by exercising care over expenditure in the home.

**disciplina:** a difficult word: we might expect it to mean here 'self-discipline', but there is no evidence that the word was used in such a way; its probable meaning is either 'training' (i.e. training in reducing expenditure) or 'habit' (i.e. the development of the habit of frugal living).

**3 publica ... animadversio:** *publica* is opposed to *domestica*; *animadversio* means one of two things: either the same as *observatio* (it would then be an example of *variatio*); or 'censure', which would be amplified and given substance in *legumque complurium sanctionibus*. Of the two meanings, the second is to be preferred, as it gives a stronger contrast with the domestic measures.

**legum:** these are the Sumptuary Laws, which Gellius proceeds to list and discuss.

**4 lex Licinia:** no details are known of this law. It must have been enacted after 161 BC, which is the date of the previous law described by Gellius (omitted here), and before 80 BC, which is the date of Sulla's legislation (the one described next by Gellius, again omitted here).

**4-5 ducenos, tricenos, etc.:** these are distributive numerals, meaning ‘two hundred’ and ‘thirty (for) each (occasion)’. The masculine plural is used to agree with *nummos* (‘coins’), here omitted. What is not clear is whether the limit of 200 etc. was per occasion, per person or per household.

**ducenos (nummos) aeris:** lit. ‘two hundred coins of bronze each’. The standard bronze coin was the *as* (*as, assis* m.), the lowest denomination coin regularly minted. Thus two hundred asses would seem a modest amount, but clearly enough to buy at least basic food and drink for a group of people, more and better food for an individual.

**5 ceteris diebus ... tricenos:** if thirty was the limit for ordinary days, and this was enough to provide an adequate amount of food and drink for an individual, then seven times that amount for weddings would seem generous if the limit were per person, less so if it were to cover the whole occasion, especially if there were many guests.

**cum:** as the *cum* clause is apparently contrasted with the main clause, it is best translated as ‘although’.

**5-6 carnis aridae:** meat was dried to make it last longer.

**6 salsamenti:** pickling, using brine, was another way of making food, this time fish, last longer. Salt-fish was the main ingredient of the ubiquitous sauce, *garum*.

**certa pondera:** ‘fixed weights’, contrasted with *promisce atque indefinite* below.

**constituisset, largita est (8):** the subject of both verbs is *lex Licinia*.

**7 quidquid esset natum:** generic subjunctive: lit. ‘whatever was born’, i.e. ‘whatever was produced’.

**vite, arbore:** collective singulars, meaning grapes and (the fruit of) any or all trees. Note the asyndeton.

**7-8 promisce, indefinite:** two post-classical words, emphatic in meaning, to give maximum contrast with the preceding clause.

**8 lex Iulia:** as with the *lex Licinia*, almost nothing is known of this law beyond what Gellius tells us here (it is probably mentioned in passing by Suetonius in his ‘*Life of Augustus*’). All the laws passed by Augustus were given the title *lex Iulia*, followed by a definition.

**8-9 Caesare Augusto imperante:** ablative absolute; Augustus reigned from 27 BC to AD 14.

**qua:** ‘by which (law)’.

**profestis quidem diebus:** ‘even on non-festival days’, i.e. ‘even on working days’; *quidem* is difficult to explain: its basic meaning is ‘indeed’, being used to emphasise a point. Note the huge increase from the limits set by the *lex Licinia*: the passage of probably a hundred years saw the debasement and devaluation of coinage, just as in modern times.

**ducenti finiuntur:** ‘two hundred are set as the limit’; the use of the present tense possibly indicates that the law was still, notionally at least, in force in Gellius’ time.

**10 Kalendis ... festis:** all ablatives of time.

**Kalendis, Idibus, Nonis:** each month in the Roman calendar had three named days: the Kalends (the 1<sup>st</sup>), the Nones (the 5<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> depending on the month), and the Ides (the 13<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> depending on the month); other days were identified by the number of days left before the next of these named days.

**aliis quibusdam festis:** supply *diebus*.

**tricenti:** an alternative spelling for the more usual *trecenti*. Supply *nummi* and *finiuntur* again.

**11 sestertii:** a sestertius was a coin worth two and a half asses: a huge increase on the Licinian law.

**aliam legem:** unknown.

**qua:** 'by which (law)'.

**11-12 per dierum varias sollemnitates:** lit. 'through various celebrations of days', i.e. 'for various day-celebrations'; *sollemnitas* is a post-classical word, meaning the celebration of a particular day, or the festival attached to a specific day.

**sumptus cenarum:** lit. 'the cost of dinners', and so 'expenditure on meals'.

**12-13 ut ... coerceretur:** purpose clause.

**13 his saltem finibus:** the word order shows that *saltem* qualifies *his finibus*: 'at least within these limits'.

**luxuriae effervescentis aestus:** lit. 'the surge of effervescent extravagance', and so 'the surge of ever-increasing extravagance'.

### *Discussion*

Late Republican Rome and the early Empire were notorious for extravagant life-styles among the upper and wealthier middle classes. There were several attempts to counter this excess from those in authority who followed the Stoic doctrine of frugal living.

Gellius provides a list of the laws passed attempting to curb extravagance; some laws dealt with other aspects of life, but Gellius focuses on those relating to expenditure on food and drink. We know next to nothing about these Sumptuary Laws; in some cases this essay is the only source of information we have. Nor do we know how the laws were policed.

Another problem for a reader today is that any attempt to compare one law with another is rendered difficult by the time intervals between them. Each law set a higher limit on expenditure; whether this equates to a relaxation of standards, or simply reflects the devaluation of currency, is almost impossible to determine.

The important thing for candidates of this specification to grasp is the prevalence of extravagant dinner parties among the elite, while at the other end of the scale, the poorest struggled to afford even the basics.

### *Questions:*

1. How did the Romans distinguish different kinds of days?
2. Which kinds of days were allowed the greatest expenditure?
3. How successful is Gellius in making this passage more interesting than a simple catalogue of laws?

## Juvenal *Satires* 11. 64-80

### An Old-Fashioned Meal.

#### Introduction

Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis was born in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and died possibly in the 130s AD. Little is known of his life. His sixteen *Satires* were written between the years 98 and 128 AD, during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian.

The *Satires* provide an embittered portrayal of life in contemporary Rome, revealing a hatred of the rich, a deep misogyny, and an enduring pessimism. He believes that the preceding generations were responsible for a decline in moral standards, and that this decline has persisted into his own time.

*Satire* 11 is a criticism of extravagant eating habits, leading to an invitation to dinner, the theme of the prescribed passage. A few lines before the start of the passage, he invites a friend called Persicus to dinner, where he will discover whether Juvenal practises what he preaches about extravagant meals.



Figure 7 Mosaic of Roman Food Items

#### Commentary

**1 *fercula*:** the *fercula* was the second or main course of a Roman dinner at this time, preceded by the *gustus* or *gustatio* and followed by the *mensae secundae*. It is on this course that Juvenal focuses. ***nullis ornata macellis*:** lit. 'adorned by no meat-markets', referring to the ornate display of foodstuffs at the market. The *macellum* is usually translated as 'meat market' but, because the market also sold fish and fresh vegetables, it is perhaps better translated as 'food market'.

**2 de Tiburtino ... agro:** this is the evidence that Juvenal possessed a farm at Tibur (Tivoli). Although he seems to have lived in poverty in his earlier days, the evidence suggests that, by the time he wrote the *Satires*, he had earned or been given enough wealth to own a second home outside of Rome.

**2-3 *pinguissimus* ... *haedulus*:** the diminutive indicates that this kid is very young, unweaned even, as the next words show. ***toto grege mollior*:** this kid is the pick of the herd. ***inscius herbae*:** it has not yet been weaned; *herbae* is objective genitive.

**4 *necdum ausus*:** 'not yet having dared'; Juvenal suggests it takes courage for a young kid to tackle eating the branches of trees.

**5 *qui plus lactis habet quam sanguinis*:** i.e. it is full of its mother's milk; the two genitives are partitive.

**5-6 *montani asparagi*:** supply *venient* as in line 2; this is not the plant today known as Mountain Asparagus (*aralia cordata*), otherwise known as Spikenard, because this was native to East Asia. Juvenal's asparagus is either *asparagus officinalis*, the same species as the one cultivated today, or *asparagus acutifolius* (common name - wild asparagus); its cultivation is attested from early Egypt, and was widespread throughout the Mediterranean. The use of the word *montani* either suggests the wild form of asparagus, or hints that Juvenal's farm was

situated on the hills of Tivoli, rather than in a valley. **quos lēgit vilica**: Juvenal spent most of his time in Rome, only visiting his farm on special occasions; to maintain the farm in his absence, he would have employed a *vilicus* or bailiff, i.e. farm-manager; the *vilica* was the manager's wife, who would be expected to take part in harvesting the crops. **posito ... fuso**: ablative absolute; the normal daily routine of a *matrona* would be spinning and weaving.

**7-8 grandia ... ova**: the largest eggs would be presented at a feast. **tortoque calentia faeno**: lit. 'and warm in twisted hay'; eggs were wrapped in hay when transported. **ipsis cum matribus**: i.e. the very hens that had laid the eggs. **adsunt**: to be taken with all the following main clauses.

**8-9 servatae ... uvae**: 'grapes that have been preserved', i.e. after being picked. **parte anni**: 'for part of the year'; ablative of time instead of the more usual accusative; *parte* is usually taken to mean 'a good part', and so 'half'. **quales fuerant**: 'such as they had been'.

**10 Signinum Syriumque pirum**: singular for plural; Signia (modern Segni) was a town in Latium, more famous for its wine than its pears, but other authors mentioned the town as a source of pears. Similarly, other writers mention Syria as a source of pears. At this point Juvenal moves on to describe the *mensae secundae*. **de corbibus isdem**: lit. 'from the same baskets', i.e. the apples were stored in the same baskets as the pears before being removed from the baskets.

**11 aemula Picenis ... māla**: 'apples rivalling Picene ones'; Picenum was a region in the North-East of Italy, famous for apples and olives. **odoris ... recentis**: genitive of description.

**12 nec metuenda tibi**: supply *erunt* for the gerundive of obligation; *metuenda* qualifies *mala*; Juvenal is saying that his guest should not fear that the apples will taste bitter, because they are not freshly picked.

**12-13** There are two ways of construing these lines: either (lit.) 'after they (the apples) have set aside autumn dried up by the cold and (set aside) the dangers of unripe juice'; or (lit.) 'after autumn has been dried up by the cold and the unripe juices have set aside their dangers'. It is impossible to determine which interpretation Juvenal intended; all modern translations resort to paraphrases, ignoring the syntax. If we take the second version, then for **siccatum frigore postquam autumnum** the order for translation is *postquam autumnum siccatum (est) frigore*: lit. 'after autumn has been dried up by the cold'; *autumnum* would then be a rare but attested neuter alternative to *autumnus*; in either version it carries an additional meaning of 'autumnal juice'; *frigore* is the cold of winter. Apples were considered to have a better flavour after they had been stored for a few months. **crudi posuere pericula suci**: for the two versions given above, *crudi suci* would be for the first genitive singular, for the second nominative plural; *posuere* = *posuerunt*. In either way of construing it, the underlying sense is the same. Note the alliteration of *p*-.

**14-15 nostri ... senatus**: possessive genitive, best translated as if dative. The key word is *olim*, meaning that times had changed. **iam luxuriosa ... cena**: usually taken to mean 'quite luxurious', the implication being that such foods, once considered luxurious, would now be thought inadequate. Note the enjambement.

**15-16 Curius**: identified as Manius Curius Dentatus, who defeated the Greek invader Pyrrhus in 274 BC; he was lauded as one of the greatest practitioners of a frugal lifestyle. **parvo ... horto**: local ablative; note the enclosing word order: the vegetable picking was all inside his small garden. **quae**: the antecedent is *holuscula*. **focis brevibus**: local ablative again; his hearth was small because little was cooked on it. **holuscula**: the diminutive form emphasises the meagreness of Curius' meals. **ipse**: this could be taken with either *legerat* or *ponebat*; it could

even qualify both verbs; the emphasis is on personal service, rather than the reliance on a mass of slaves to prepare and serve the food. Note the emphasis on smallness in these two lines.

**16-17 quae:** the antecedent is again *holuscula*. **nunc:** contrasted with *olim*. **squalidus ... fossor:** he epitomises the lowest of the low. **fastidit:** 'turns his nose up at'. **in magna ... compede:** a *compes* is a shackle for the feet; on farms and roadsides there would be chain-gangs of slaves set to work at labour-intensive tasks. Note how *magna* contrasts with the words denoting smallness in the preceding lines; perhaps Juvenal also means to indicate that the slave is further humbled by the fact that he is wearing a heavy shackle, rather than a light one which would be less degrading.

### *Discussion*

Juvenal describes a possibly imaginary feast that he would prepare for a dinner party to which he has invited a friend. The foods he describes are far from cheap but are not considered extravagant — merely the minimum appropriate for a party. He then remarks that such a meal would once have been thought luxurious by the senate, but now even the humblest slave would turn his nose up at it. This is all part of Juvenal's diatribe against the extravagance prevalent in his own day.

### *Questions*

1. What point do you think Juvenal is making by describing the foods for his dinner party in such detail?
2. How does Juvenal emphasise the special quality of these foods?
3. What point is Juvenal making in this passage?
4. How serious do you think Juvenal is being?

## Martial *Epigrams* 3.60

### A Change of Status is Not Acknowledged.

#### Introduction

Marcus Valerius Martialis was born in Spain around AD 40 and died in 104. In 64 he moved to Rome, living in poverty to begin with, but later possessing a house in Rome and a country farm. Devoting his life to poetry, he wrote a couple of minor works before embarking in c. 86 on his major work, the *Epigrams*, in 14 books, the last appearing two years before his death. He numbered Pliny and Juvenal among his friends.



Figure 8 Reconstruction of a Roman dining room (triclinium)

The *Epigrams* are short poems, often only two lines long, each devoted to a single theme relating to the quirks and excesses of life in Rome, and frequently characterised by pungent wit. Many are addressed to individuals, whose real names are unknown to us, their point being usually to criticise, occasionally to praise.

The prescribed epigram 3.60 is the complete poem, and so there is no extra context in which to place it.

#### Commentary

**1 cum vocer:** *cum* + present passive subjunctive: 'since I am invited'. **non iam venalis:** 'no longer able to be bought'; the emperor Domitian had abolished the traditional *sportula*, the gift of 6.25 sesterces handed out by a *patronus* to his *clientes* at the morning *salutatio*. In return for the hand-out, the clients were expected to perform various duties in support of their patron. In this respect, Martius could, with good reason, consider that the client used to be a man-for-sale. After the change in the law, patrons were expected to reward their clients with invitations to dinner, and these were not always popular with patrons, who faced extra calls on their money and time. To compensate, many patrons adopted the habit of serving inferior wine and food to their clients, which would be obvious to all when there was a social mixture of dinner-guests.

**2 mihi non eadem, quae tibi cena:** Martial's patron has adopted the practice mentioned above. *tibi* (named as Ponticus in line 9) is either the patron or a more exalted guest.

**3 ostrea ... stagno saturata Lucrino:** Lake Lucrinus is a lake just inland from the coast of the Bay of Naples to the west of Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli). A Roman engineer called Sergius Orata is credited with establishing the first oyster beds in the lake. The volcanic water of the lake was believed to impart special flavours to the oysters. Thus these oysters, saturated with the lake's water, would have been of superior quality. Note the emphatic position of *ostrea*, with *tu* alongside it also for emphasis.

**4 mitulus:** mussels were considered inferior to oysters. **inciso ... ore:** ablative absolute, lit. 'with mouth cut open'; this has been interpreted in two ways: 'through a hole in the shell' or 'cutting my mouth': the second is the simpler interpretation, and makes good sense: mussel

shells are rough and have sharp edges, but Martial is probably presenting a worst-case scenario. **mihi**: a dative either of the agent or of disadvantage; note its emphatic position at the end of the line, almost diametrically opposite to *tu* in the line above.

**5 boleti**: the *boletus* genus of fungi (today's culinary name *porcini*) is highly prized for its flavours, some being considered superior to common mushrooms. To what extent the Latin name coincides with members of the *boletus* group today is of course unknown; all that can be said with any certainty is that the Romans reserved the name for the highest quality mushrooms. **fungos ... suillos**: the 'pig fungus' was clearly an inferior type; although there are 'hog mushrooms' today, these are named after hedgehogs rather than pigs; thus the Roman version cannot now be identified. Note the juxtaposition of *boleti*, *fungos* for maximum contrast, with *suillos* at the end for another emphasis.

**6 res tibi ... est**: 'the business for you is', i.e. 'you are dealing with'. **rhombo**: a flatfish, probably turbot, a fish highly prized for its delicate flavour. **at mihi**: supply *res est*. **sparulo**: bream or brill or some such, inferior to turbot. In the dictionary, this diminutive form of *sparus* is listed as a separate species or sub-species, but it is more likely that Martial is using the diminutive form to show what a small serving he had.

**7 aureus turtur**: lit. 'a golden turtle-dove', but since these birds are not gold-coloured, it is best to give *aureus* its secondary meaning of 'beautiful' or 'splendid'. Turtle-doves have been highly prized for their meat in Europe throughout history, and millions are still killed every year all over the continent. **immodicis clunibus**: the *clunis* is the buttock or haunch; why Martial chooses this part of the bird rather than the more likely breast is uncertain.

**8 in cavea mortua pica**: a dead magpie, kept in a cage until it died, was a very inferior bird.

**9 cur sine te ceno**: 'why do I dine without you', i.e. 'why do I dine on food so different from yours that we might as well be dining separately'. **cum tecum ... cenem**: 'although I am dining with you'; a typical epigrammatic line, the point being that, although he is physically dining with Ponticus, because their food does not coincide, they are in effect dining separately. **Ponticus**: unknown.

**10 sportula quod non est**: as stated above, the dole was abolished by Domitian. **prosit**: third person command: 'let it be advantageous', or 'let it be of benefit'. **edamus**: first person command. The argument is, 'if we can't have a hand-out of money any more, at least we should eat the same food'.

### Discussion

This poem, written in elegiac couplets (alternating dactylic hexameters and pentameters), neatly divides into pairs of lines, with the first stating what Ponticus has to eat, the second what Martial has; the exception are lines 5 and 6, where each line contains its own contrast. The final two lines provide the epigrammatic conclusion. Each pair of foods is similar in type but different in quality. There is a sort of ring composition to the poem, because it starts and ends with the change in the patron-client relationship.

### Questions

1. What are the different pairs of food items that Martial mentions?
2. In what way are the two items in each pair different?
3. How successfully does Martial make this list of food items interesting?
4. What point is Martial making?

## Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1. 221-232, 236-239

### A Gruesome Taste Test Goes Wrong.

#### Introduction

Publius Ovidius Maro was born in Central Italy on the 20<sup>th</sup> March, 43 BC. His father was an *eques*, with the money and ambition to send the young Ovid to Rome for a high-quality education. Although he was, to his father's annoyance, from the outset more interested in penning poetry than preparing for a conventional political career, he made himself study rhetoric and philosophy in Rome and Athens. The public service career that followed the completion of his studies was short-lived, for he quickly grew tired of judging lawsuits and turned instead to his first love: poetry.

His first work, the *Amores*, written sometime after 16 BC, established his reputation as a poet of the highest quality, bringing him patronage and a widening circle of friends. There followed the *Heroides* and the *Ars Amatoria*, a work which playfully encouraged extra-marital affairs; this work elicited the anger of the emperor Augustus, who had been actively encouraging marital stability. As a result of this work and also of some unidentified 'error' that he committed, Ovid was banished by the emperor, at the age of 50, to Tomis on the shores of the Black Sea, where he died nine years later, in AD 17.

Between the publication of the *Ars Amatoria* and his banishment in AD 8, Ovid wrote his greatest work, the *Metamorphoses*, comprised of fifteen books of hexameter verse devoted to the retelling of myths that involved some kind of metamorphosis or change of shape, usually from human to animal or vegetable. The books work their way through human history, from the origins of the universe through the Greek Golden Age down to legends and stories from his own culture.

In the lines leading up to this passage, Jupiter informs the assembled gods that, after hearing that the human race had sunk into barbarism, he had visited many lands, disguised as a human, to see for himself how bad the world had become. Shunned by all, he came finally to the palace of Lycaon, the cruel king of Arcadia. The whole passage is spoken by Jupiter to the gods.

#### Commentary

**1-2 Lycaon mox ait:** i.e. soon after Jupiter's arrival, he spoke (to himself); *ait* is historic present, as are most of the main verbs in the passage; their effect is to bring the narrative to life, as if it were a drama being acted out before the eyes of the assembled gods.

**2-3 experiar ... mortalis:** the word order is *experiar aperto discrimine (utrum) hic (vir) sit deus an mortalis*. **experiar:** future indicative of the deponent verb. **aperto discrimine:** lit. 'with a plain distinction', and so 'with a simple test'; ablative of instrument. **sit:** subjunctive for an indirect question, with *an* introducing the second of two alternatives; as often the *utrum* is omitted.

**4-5 nocte:** ablative of time. **gravem somno ... me:** 'me when I was heavy with sleep'; *somno* is causal ablative. **necopina ... morte:** 'with unexpected death' (ablative of manner). **morte me parat:** note the enjambement and alliteration of *m-*, both serving to emphasise the shocking nature of Lycaon's action.

**5 haec ... experientia veri:** 'this way of establishing the truth'; *veri* is objective genitive.

**6 eo:** 'with that': a sort of ablative of instrument; *eo* refers to the attempt to kill Jupiter while he was asleep; having failed in this, Lycaon was determined to make a further attempt.

**6-7 missi ... obsidis unius iugulum:** 'the throat of one hostage sent'; *unius* is hardly more than an indefinite article here. **de gente Molossa:** 'from (i.e. by) the Molossian people'; the Molossians lived in Epirus, part of north west Greece. They would have been forced to send hostages to Lycaon to avoid being attacked and crushed by him. **resolvit:** 'he opens', i.e. 'he slits'.

**8-9 atque ita:** 'and like this', i.e. as he is about to describe. **partim ... partim:** 'partly ... partly', and so 'some ... some'. **semineces ... artus:** '(some of) the half-dead limbs'; *artus* was not restricted to arms and legs, but could refer to any distinct parts of a body; these were 'half-dead' in the sense that they were still warm and supple from life. **ferventibus ... aquis:** note the framing word order: the limbs are framed within the boiling water, reflecting reality. **mollit, torruit:** the mixing of historic present and perfect is not uncommon; it may perhaps be considered an example of *variatio*. **subiecto ... igni:** probably an instrumental ablative rather than an ablative absolute; note the framing technique again; lit. 'with fire placed under'.

**10-11 quos:** connecting relative referring to the *artus*. **simul = simulatque.** **mensis:** probably dative dependent on the compound verb. **vindice flamma:** i.e. with his special weapon, the thunderbolt (instrumental ablative). **ego ... Penates:** the order for translation is *ego everti tecta in Penates dignos domino*. **in Penates:** *in* is a long way from its noun: 'onto the Penates', the idea being that the house collapsed upon the statues of the household gods; since the deities were believed to inhabit their statues, they too would have been destroyed; thus, the destruction of the house and the family would have been complete. Ovid is assuming that the domestic worship of the Penates, standard practice in his own day, would also have been normal in this early period of human history. The Penates were worshipped as deities responsible for protecting the food store of a household and by extension the family itself. **domino dignos:** '(Penates) worthy of their master', i.e. they were no better than the master of the household; *dignus* always takes an ablative.

**12 fugit:** the metre shows that this is a return to the historic present as the *u* of *fugit* is short. **nactusque:** supply *est*. **silentia ruris:** lit. 'the silent things of the countryside', and so 'the silence of the countryside'; Ovid uses the word *silentia* to contrast with *exululat* which begins the following line (here omitted). The countryside was an appropriate setting for Lycaon's metamorphosis.

**(Lines 233-5 (omitted):** Lycaon howled when he tried to speak and, true to his human nature, savaged the flocks of sheep.)

**13 abeunt:** lit. 'go away', 'depart', and so, as often used by Ovid, 'change'. **in crura lacerti:** supply *abeunt* again. The howling in the omitted lines gives the first indication of Lycaon's metamorphosis; here we get a clearer indication, but the full revelation comes only in the next line. Thus Ovid uses one of his favourite descriptive devices, in which clues to a transformation are provided in a gradient of clarity, reaching a climax with the final full identification.

**14 fit lupus:** when the metamorphosis is finally confirmed, it is expressed with the fewest possible words for maximum effect. **veteris servat vestigia formae:** note the framing word order of *veteris formae* and the alliteration of *v-*; the preserved elements are listed in the next lines.

**15 canities:** the natural grey colour of the wolf matches Lycaon's grey hair. **violentia vultus:** note the alliteration of *v-* again.

**16 eadem ... eadem ... idem ... eadem:** the strong anaphora has the effect of emphasising how similar Lycaon had been in his human form to his new lupine appearance and character.

### *Discussion*

The myth of Lycaon appears in the works of a number of Greek poets, where he sometimes features as a pious king, who founded the cult of Zeus Lycaeus; usually however, he is represented as impious, and it is this version that Ovid has adopted, because the story involves a metamorphosis. The Greek word for 'wolf' was λύκος (lykos), which the Greeks identified with Lycaon (Λυκάων), and they probably saw this myth as explaining the origin of the werewolf (lycanthrope); Lycaon would then be the prototype.

There were several myths in which wicked kings served up human flesh at banquets to guests they wanted to punish or humiliate; generally such wickedness was punished by the gods.

Following his confirmation of the evils of humanity, Jupiter caused a flood to envelop the Earth, killing all humans with the exception of one pious man, Deucalion, and his wife.

### *Questions*

1. Do you think this episode is more or less dramatic because it is in direct speech? Give reasons for your answer.
2. How did Lycaon intend to prove Jupiter's mortality?
3. How successfully does Ovid depict Lycaon's depravity?
4. How appropriate to the character and appearance of Lycaon was his metamorphosis into a wolf?

## Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8. 664-688

### Good Hospitality

#### Introduction

The theme of this passage overlaps that of the preceding one: once again Jupiter has been testing the morality of the human race; he and Mercury have visited a thousand homes in disguise, seeking hospitality, and have been turned away by all except one couple, Baucis and Philemon, who, despite their age and poverty, do their best to feed the two gods. As a result, when the world is flooded and all other mortals are killed, Baucis and Philemon alone are treated with honour, being appointed priests of a new temple created out of their humble cottage. Upon their deaths they are metamorphosed into adjacent trees standing guard over the temple.

In the lines leading up to this passage, the cottage in which Baucis and Philemon live is described: they have lived there all their lives, and it is small, rustic and showing its age. The couple, unaware of who their visitors really are, welcome the gods into their home and light a fire, on which they heat water to cook a very basic meal, consisting of a cabbage from their garden and a long-preserved chine of bacon. While the food is cooking, Baucis sets the table.

#### Commentary

**1 ponitur:** like most verbs in this passage, the historic present is used; although the verb is singular, it should be taken with all the items listed in the first four lines. **hic:** i.e. on the table just described. **bicolor ... baca:** the 'two-coloured berry' is the olive, which could be black or green. **sincerae ... Minervae:** the olive was sacred to 'pure Minerva', who (as the Greek Athena) gave the olive as a gift to the city of Athens.

**2 corna autumnalia:** 'cornel-cherries (picked) in autumn'; the cornel tree grows wild around the Mediterranean Sea; its red berries, slightly acidic even when ripe, are widely used today for making jam, pickles and alcoholic drinks. **condita:** 'placed for preservation', and so simply 'preserved'. **in liquida ... faece:** lit. 'in liquid sediment', here one used for pickling, i.e. brine.

**3 lactis ... coacti:** 'of curdled milk', i.e. 'of cream cheese'.

**4 ova ... leviter versata:** lit. 'eggs lightly turned', so that they cooked evenly in the ashes. **non acri ... favilla:** local ablative: 'in the not fierce ashes', and so 'in the warm ashes'. Note the framing word order again: the turning (of the eggs) is enclosed within the warm ashes.

**5 omnia fictilibus:** 'everything' (i.e. all the food items just listed) '(served) in earthenware (dishes)' local ablative. These words demonstrate the poverty of Baucis and Philemon: even when entertaining they have no best-quality tableware (e.g. silver) to set before their guests.

**5-7 post haec:** *haec* refers to all the foodstuffs already described. **caelatus eodem ... argenteo crater:** lit. 'a mixing-bowl engraved with the same silver' (ablative of material); since no silver has been mentioned previously, Ovid must be using the term ironically: the mixing-bowl was just as much made of embossed silver as were the serving bowls, i.e. not at all. A *crater* was a Greek pottery vessel adopted by the Romans, who usually made them out of more expensive material; they were used at dinner parties to mix wine with water, as wine was never drunk undiluted. **sistitur:** 'was set', i.e. on the table. **fago:** ablative of material again; these were not high-status cups. **quae cava sunt:** the cups were fashioned from blocks of wood, with the insides hollowed out. **flaventibus illita ceris:** the cups were 'coated with yellow wax', to prevent the wine from seeping into and staining the wood; another ablative of material.

**8 foci misere:** 'the hearth (plural for singular) sent forth', i.e. 'yielded up'; *misere* = *miserunt*.

**9 nec longae ... vina senectae:** 'wines of not long old age', and so 'wines of no great age'; just like today, the best and most expensive wines were allowed to mature for many years before drinking; this couple can only afford plonk; the genitive is descriptive; *vina* is best treated as plural for singular. **rursus referuntur:** 'were brought back again' to the table. Presumably the cups and mixing-bowl were removed to make way for the food dishes, and then replaced and replenished when the food was consumed.

**10 dantque locum:** the cups and mixing bowl were moved aside again to make way for the second course. **paulum:** either adverbial 'for a short time' or (probably less likely) adjectival, agreeing with *locum*: 'a small space'. **mensis secundis:** indirect object.

**11 hic ... hic:** the anaphora suggests the items are being pointed out to the reader or listener. **nux, carica** are collective singulars, to be translated as plurals. **rugosis ... palmis:** could be either dative or ablative; *palma* means 'palm-tree' and so the fruit of a palm-tree, i.e. a date; they are wrinkled because they have dried out during storage.

**12 in patulis ... canistris:** note the framing word order.

**13 purpureis:** this is an example of a 'transferred epithet', a fairly common poetic device, where an adjective has been made to agree with a noun other than the one it naturally describes: here it is the grape that is purple, not the vine, but *purpureis* agrees with *vitibus*.

**14 candidus ... favus:** *candidus* literally means 'white', especially 'brilliant white', and so by extension any bright pale colour. Note the fast rhythm of this line (entirely dactylic), perhaps to express the cheerful speed with which the meal is consumed.

**14-15 super omnia:** 'in addition to all (the food)'. **accessere = accesserunt;** the meaning is 'were there as well' (as the food), partially repeating the idea of *super*. **voluntas:** supply *accessit*. **nec iners pauperque:** 'neither sluggish nor poor' (*variatio* for *nec iners nec pauper*); this is an example of litotes, where a double negative gives a strong affirmative; the effective meaning therefore is 'both lively and rich'. At this point the meal achieves success.

**16-17** the order for translation is *interea vident cratera, (quotiens) haustum (esset), totiens repleti sponte sua, per seque vina succrescere*. **totiens:** as often, this stands for *quotiens ... totiens*: 'as often as' or 'every time that'. **cratera:** being a Greek word, *crater* is often given a Greek accusative singular ending, as here. **sponte sua per seque:** the two phrases are synonymous; although one would have sufficed to colour both infinitives, Ovid has added the second to emphasise the shock of what the couple saw. Note also the sibilance.

**18-19: manibusque supinis:** ablative of manner: 'with upturned hands'; this was the standard position adopted in Roman times for prayer, as shown in many sculptures. **Baucisque timidusque Philemon:** the polysyndeton emphasises the fact that both were equally affected by the miracle.

**20 dapibus nullisque paratibus:** these are datives, similar to indirect objects.

**21 minimae custodia villae:** note the framing word order again; *custodia* is in apposition to *anser*; *villa* was usually used to denote a large country estate of a wealthy individual; here it is used ironically, like *eodem argento* above. The use of *minimae* to describe the *villae* is in effect an oxymoron, as the two words are not naturally associated with each other, indicating opposites of scale.

**22 quem:** a connecting relative, referring to the goose; translate as 'it'. **dis hospitibus:** lit. 'for their gods-guests', i.e. 'for their divine guests'. **parabant:** imperfect (instead of historic present) because the verb is setting the scene for what follows.

**23 ille:** the goose. **celer penna:** lit. 'swift with its wing', and so 'swift of wing'; *penna*, paralleled by *aetate*, is a causal ablative. Note the two parallel descriptions, side by side for maximum contrast.

**24-25 est visus ... confugisse:** the change from the historic present to a double perfect is striking; the idea behind the change is to show that the actions in the historic present went on for some time (note *diu*), whereas the goose's taking refuge with the gods was a single, closing act. **ad ipsos ... deos:** there is humour in the idea that the goose sought refuge with the very beings who were supposed to eat it. **vetuere** = *vetuerunt*. **necari:** supply *eum* or *anserem* as the object of *vetuere* and subject of *necari*.

### Discussion

This story forms part of one of the many flood myths that are found all across the ancient world. In all these stories, a god or gods decide to punish wicked humanity with an all-encompassing flood but save one or two people who stood out from the rest for their piety. This episode focuses on the abject poverty of Baucis and Philemon, despite which they do their utmost to provide the gods with due hospitality. The offering of hospitality to strangers was seen as a virtue across the ancient world, as it still is in many parts of the world.

In his description of the feast and its preparation, Ovid misses no opportunity to highlight the poverty of the couple: their offerings are poor in scale and source, and the crockery is of the lowest quality. The passage builds to a climactic point with the word *voluntas*, which is the motivation for the gods to reveal their identities through the miracle of the self-replenishing wine.

Whether Ovid uses the tale to spread a moral message is far from certain, as this does not appear to be a major element of the *Metamorphoses*; perhaps it is better to see it as an interesting story of contrasts. Certainly, the contrast with the preceding story of Lycaon is stark.

### Questions

1. How does Ovid show the poverty of Baucis and Philemon throughout this passage?
2. How does Ovid use framing word order to create special effects in the passage? Give examples.
3. Can you identify any humour in the passage?
4. How successfully does Ovid contrast the characters and actions of Lycaon and Baucis and Philemon?

## Petronius *Cena Trimalchionis* 31-34

### A Host Displays His Wealth.

#### Introduction

Gaius Petronius Arbiter was born sometime around AD 27 and died by his own hand in 66. It is possible that he was born and raised in Massalia (modern Marseille), but must soon have moved to Rome, where he pursued a political career before devoting himself to a life of pleasure. He became a member of Nero's court, being styled Nero's *elegantiae arbiter*, a sort of fashion adviser. He committed suicide after being wrongly accused by a political rival of plotting against Nero.

His one partially surviving work is the *Satyricon*, a novel that follows the adventures of two dissolute young men, Encolpius and Ascyltus, together with their slave-boy Giton, as they journey round the Greek cities of Southern Italy. Among the fragments that have survived is the *Cena Trimalchionis*, a lavish dinner-party to which the three characters gain an invitation.



Figure 9 Silver tableware of the sort Trimalchio might have had.

Trimalchio is a self-made multi-millionaire with very poor taste, who wishes to ape the manners and lifestyle of the old aristocracy, but succeeds only in parodying them. His large house presents an extravagant display of wealth, while the meal itself is comprised of a profusion of exotic dishes.

Just prior to the set passage, Encolpius and Ascyltus have entered the dining room, where slaves have washed their hands and cut their toenails.

#### Commentary

**1 tamen:** this word represents a change of topic, as Encolpius has just been describing the sing-song voices of the slaves.

**gustatio:** the first course, or hors d'oeuvre.

**1-2 omnes discubuerant:** 'everyone had separated to take their places'; the prefix indicates that the eight guests, previously milling around, had now split up to find their allocated places on the three couches (technically known as (*lectulus*) *imus*, *medius* and *summus*).

**praeter ipsum Trimalchionem:** it would have been unusual for a meal to start without the host; Trimalchio shows his lack of good manners.

**2-3 cui locus ... primus servabatur:** this was unusual, because the host usually reclined diagonally across on the opposite couch (technically *summus in imo*); the 'first place' (*summus in summo*) was usually reserved for the principal guest.

**novo more:** ablative of manner; nothing is known of this 'new custom'; it is quite possible that Petronius is being ironic, implying that Trimalchio is, by this singular act, setting a new fashion.

**3 ceterum:** 'but', i.e. despite the absence of the host, the food was being brought in.

**3-4 asellus ... Corinthius:** lit. 'a Corinthian donkey'; the adjective *Corinthius* came to be used as an abbreviation for *Corinthium aes* - 'Corinthian bronze', which was a highly-prized alloy of bronze, silver and gold.

**erat ... positus:** 'had been placed'.

**4 cum bisaccio:** 'with a double pannier', i.e. one hanging on each side.

**qui habebat:** singular because the antecedent (*bisaccio*) is singular, but may be treated as plural.

**4-5 in altera parte ... in altera:** 'on one side ... on the other'.

**olivas ... albas:** just as white wine is never actually white, but yellow or greenish-yellow, so here the 'white olives' would have been green ones.

**7 argenti pondus:** a second subject of *inscriptum erat*; it may have been considered vulgar to make a display of the weight of the precious metal. Inscribing the owner's name was perhaps also in poor taste.

**ponticuli ... ferruminati:** lit. 'soldered little bridges', i.e. frameworks that were soldered to the *lances*.

**glires:** dormice were highly prized for their flavour.

**8 fuerunt et tomacula:** 'there were also sausages'.

**9 Syriaca pruna:** lit. 'Syrian plums', i.e. 'damsons' (the etymology of 'damson' is 'Damascene', i.e. 'from Damascus').

**10 Punici mali:** lit. 'Carthaginian apple', but actually the standard name for a pomegranate.

**in his eramus lautitiis:** note the enclosing word order.

**cum:** this is the 'inverse *cum*', taking the indicative. i.e. this is where the main event of the sentence occurs in the middle of another process.

**11 ad symphoniam:** lit. 'to harmony', i.e. to the accompaniment of music from the band.

**allatus est:** i.e. he was brought in on a litter.

**positusque:** 'and having been placed (on his couch)'.

**12 expressit:** 'he elicited'.

**imprudens:** ablative of separation.

**pallio ... coccineo:** ablative of separation.

**13 excluserat:** transitive: 'he had stuck out (his head)'.

**circa:** preposition governing *cervices*.

**14 laticlaviam mappam:** the broad stripe was the traditional mark of a senator, sewn onto their tunics; either Trimalchio is showing ignorance of a long-standing tradition, or he aspires to copy the ruling class.

**14-15 fimbriis ... pendentibus:** either ablative absolute or ablative of attendant circumstances.

**14 hinc atque illinc:** ‘on this side and on that’, and so ‘on both sides’. A young Julius Caesar evoked derision for wearing similar tassels.

**15 nondum mihi suave erat:** lit. ‘it was not yet agreeable for me’, and so ‘it was not yet convenient for me’. The ploy that he wanted to finish a board game before joining his guests is presumably designed to show his superiority to them.

**17 terebinthina:** the terebinth is otherwise known as the turpentine tree, *Pistacia terebinthus*, which is native to the Mediterranean; it is the source of turpentine. Its wood is strong and durable and is used today to make furniture, flooring and other products.

**crystallinis tesseris:** ‘and with crystal dice’; they would have been carved from rock-crystal (quartz), a difficult craft which would have made the dice expensive.

**calculis:** these are the counters used in a game similar to draughts. Note the chiasmus of the four colours and objects.

**18 aureos argenteosque ... denarios:** ‘aurei and silver denarii’; the *aureus* was the standard gold coin in circulation since the first century BC; it was the same size as the denarius. The denarius (originally worth ten asses) was the standard silver coin since the second century BC.

**18-19 gustantibus adhuc nobis:** ablative absolute: ‘while we were still tasting’, i.e. still eating the *gustatio*.

**19 repositorium:** a dumb-waiter or large tray.

**20 patentibus in orbem alis:** ablative absolute: ‘with its wings opening out into a circle’, i.e. the spread wings gave a broadly circular shape to the bird.

**quales esse solent:** *quales* agrees with *gallinae* (to be understood from the context): ‘just like (the hens) are accustomed to be’.

**quae:** as with *quales*, the antecedent of *quae* is *gallinae*: ‘(the hens) that are incubating eggs’.

**21-22 symphonia strepente:** ablative absolute.

**22 erutaque ... pavonina ova dividerunt:** lit. ‘they distributed the having-been-dug-out peahen eggs’. Peafowl and their eggs were highly prized delicacies.

**23-24 amphorae vitreae diligenter gypsatae:** amphorae are the large, two-handled jars with tapering bases that were used to store liquid goods and transport them. Normally they were made of thick earthenware, making them very heavy. Once sealed, in this case with gypsum (used to make a kind of plaster-of-Paris), wine could be kept in them for decades, as far as can be judged, without deterioration. These amphorae would be most unusual being made of glass; many Roman glass bottles have been found, but they are much smaller than amphorae.

**24-25 Falernum Opimianum annorum centum:** Falernian was a white wine grown on the slopes of Mt Falernus (today Monte Massico), on the border of Latium and Campania. It was the most highly prized and most expensive wine, improving as it matured in the amphorae, where it was typically kept for 15-20 years before drinking. It had a very high alcohol content, far above that of today’s wines. ‘Opimian’ refers to the consulship of Opimius in 121 BC, a year which produced one of the most renowned vintages. The idea that Trimalchio is serving wine that is a hundred years old is not feasible, and serves merely to exaggerate the excessive extravagance of Trimalchio. It was well known that much of the wine labelled Falernian that was exported around the empire was in fact cheap wine masquerading as the real thing. This 100-year-old wine is just too good to be true.

**26 vinum non tam bonum:** 'inferior wine'.

**multo honestiores cenabant:** i.e. his current guests should be impressed that they are being given better wine than yesterday's more respectable men.

### *Discussion*

This passage is one small window into the extravagance of Trimalchio's dinner party, the description of which occupies 53 sections (the prescribed passage takes up parts of just four sections). In this passage we learn only of the first course, including the exotic and expensive serving bowls, platters and contraptions. Everything is designed to show off Trimalchio's wealth, but at the same time his lack of good taste. Even the wine, designed to impress, is too good to be true. It is also worth noting how Trimalchio treats his guests.

### *Questions*

1. How would you describe the character of Trimalchio based on this passage? Support your answer with examples from the passage.
2. What examples of exaggeration can you find in this passage?
3. What makes this passage interesting to read?



*Figure 10 Roman glass jug, c.1st century CE*

## Pliny Letters 2.6

### How Not to Treat Your Guests.

#### Introduction

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus was adopted under the will of his uncle, Pliny the Elder, who lost his life trying to rescue friends from the eruption of Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii. He was born at Comum (modern Como, in North Italy) in AD 61/62 and died in c. 113. After an education in Rome, he pursued a successful political and legal career under the emperor Trajan. He used his immense wealth for philanthropic purposes, endowing temples and a library and making other charitable donations.

He is remembered mainly for his *Letters*, published in ten books, the last of which is devoted to his official correspondence with the emperor. The letters cover a wide range of subjects, including both private matters and issues of public interest. They were either written or revised for publication, and demonstrate an elegant style of writing.

The prescribed letter is addressed to Iunius Avitus, who was a young client of Pliny's on the point of embarking on a public career. The letter, dating to c. 98, records an unpleasant dinner party Pliny attended, and offers advice to Avitus on how a host should treat his guests.

#### Commentary

**1 longum est altius repetere:** lit. 'it is long to recall more deeply', i.e. 'it would take too long to recall in greater detail'.

**nec refert:** *refert* is an impersonal verb.

**quemadmodum:** 'how it happened'.

**2 ut ... cenarem:** '(how it happened) that I was dining' (subjunctive in a result clause).

**homo minime familiaris:** '(that I), a man not at all closely connected'; *homo* is in apposition to *ego* (understood).

**2-3 ut sibi videbatur:** 'as it seemed to the man himself'; *sibi* is used instead of the more correct *ei ipsi*.

**3 ut mihi:** supply *videbatur*.

**3-4 sordidum simul et sumptuosum:** note the sibilance (alliteration of s-), making a hissing sound of disapproval. The two adjectives are opposites and appear to contradict each other; it will soon become clear that they apply to the different ways the man treats his guests.

**4 opima quaedam:** 'certain sumptuous dishes'; supply *ponebat* with both halves.

**5 parvulis laguncolis:** 'in tiny little flasks'; note the two diminutive suffixes, greatly emphasising the smallness of the bottles.

**in tria genera:** 'into three categories', i.e. qualities.

**6 non ut potestas eligendi:** supply *esset*, which belongs with both parts. It was the host who decided who had which wines.

**eligendi, recusandi:** the two gerunds are genitives of definition.

**7-8 aliud ... aliud ... aliud:** supply *discripserat* from above. The anaphora is used to introduce the three parts of a tricolon.

**7 sibi et nobis:** Pliny does not define *nobis*: he could be with his wife, or he could be using plural for singular (at the start he used the singular verb *cenarem*).

**minoribus amicis:** i.e. not close or important friends.

**8 gradatim amicos habet:** the key phrase, summing up the theme of the letter. There is evidence from other writers that it was common for friends to be graded like this. This is an unusual use of *gradatim*, which normally means 'gradually'.

**suis nostrisque libertis:** it was normal for a patron to invite one or more freedmen (who would have become his clients); apparently on this occasion Pliny's own freedmen were also invited. In view of the plurals, and if there were the standard nine places (three per couch), there would have been few places left for the friends.

**9 qui = is qui.**

**an probarem:** 'whether I approved'; *an* is an alternative for *num* for introducing an indirect question.

**10-11 quam consuetudinem sequeris:** 'what practice do you follow?'

**11 non ad notam:** lit. 'not to a mark', i.e. 'not to grade them'. This metaphor refers to the practice of the censors of placing a ('black') mark against the names of those citizens who had a bad reputation.

**12 invito:** supply *eos* or similar.

**cunctisque rebus:** ablative of respect.

**quos mensa et toro aequavi:** more ablatives of respect: 'whom I have made equal at the table and couch'; he has made all his guests equal simply by inviting them to dinner, and so he treats them equally in all things, i.e. in the food and drink they are served.

**13 etiamne libertos:** Pliny's neighbour appears to expect freedmen to be treated differently.

**tunc:** i.e. when they are dinner guests.

**14 puto:** to be taken with both *convictores* and *libertos*.

**et ille:** supply *dixit*.

**magno:** ablative of price.

**qui:** adverbial: 'how'.

**15 scilicet:** 'of course'.

**14-15 quia ... liberti:** note the chiasmic word order: *liberti ... quod ... ego ... ego ... quod ... liberti*. He is saying that he does not give everyone expensive food and wine, which would indeed cost a lot of money; instead he gives everyone, including himself, cheaper fare.

**16 memento:** at this point Pliny turns away from the description of the dinner party and offers advice to his young friend.

**nihil magis esse vitandum:** indirect statement.

**16-17 istam luxuriae et sordium novam societatem:** *istam* is used to point derogatively at the practice just described. *novam societatem* suggests that the practice described is a new fashion.

**17 quae cum sint turpissima:** supply *ea*: 'these things (*luxuria* and *sordes*), although they are very shameful'.

**17-18 discreta et separata:** tautology for emphasis; add 'when' in the translation.

**18 turpius:** the comparative here exceeds the superlative.

**iunguntur:** lit. 'they are joined more shamefully'; Pliny uses the passive indicative instead of the participle *iuncta* to give *variatio* from the two preceding participles.

### *Discussion*

This is a very carefully constructed letter, full of balanced pairs of contrasting ideas. Each pair usually shares a verb (e.g. *videbatur, ponebat, esset, invito, puto, bibunt*). There are other similar contrasting couplets without shared verbs.

Pliny uses the unpleasant experience partly to show his own ethics and partly to provide a moral example to Avitus. This is evidence that a good patron would consider it his duty to provide moral instruction for young clients.

### *Questions*

1. What does Pliny object to at this dinner party?
2. How differently does Pliny manage his own dinner parties?
3. What impression of Pliny's character do you gain from this letter?

## Seneca de Clementia 1.18

### A Meal for the Lampreys.

#### Introduction

Lucius Annaeus Seneca ('Seneca the Younger' or 'Seneca the Philosopher') was the second son of Seneca the Elder, who practised rhetoric. The younger Seneca was born at Corduba in Spain in about 4 BC, but moved at a young age to Rome where he was educated. He studied philosophy, being attracted to Stoicism. Entering politics, he narrowly avoided execution under Caligula, and then became one of the courtiers of Claudius. After a period of exile on Corsica, he was recalled to Rome to become the tutor of the young Nero. He was able to exercise a restraining influence over Nero's wilder urges after he became emperor, until the influence of others began to give Nero the freedom to abandon self-control. Seneca retired but was charged with complicity in a conspiracy, and was ordered to take his own life, which he did in AD 65.

Seneca was a prolific writer, publishing a large number of moral treatises (many of which have survived), works on nature, satires and tragic plays. The prescribed work is one of the moral treatises, written in about AD 55-56, when Nero was newly on the throne and still behaving himself. Originally in three books, (only the first and part of the second survive), it promotes the need for a ruler to show clemency, praising Nero in the process, because at this period of his reign, Nero did value the lives of others.

#### Commentary

**1 Vedium Pollionem:** Publius Vedium Pollio was an *eques* who rose to power through the friendship and support of the emperor Augustus, becoming governor of the province of Asia, which was most unusual for someone of equestrian rank. Even more unusual was the fact that he had a coin issued with his image and name. Later he returned to Rome, where he became notorious for excessive luxury and for the ill-treatment of his slaves. A number of Roman writers tell the same story about him as Seneca does here. Vedium Pollio died in 15 BC.

**servi sui:** *sui* breaks the rules for reflexives, but is used because the sense requires it.

**2 iste:** used pejoratively.

**muraenas:** the Latin word *muraena* (from the Greek) is the root of the modern *Muraena*, which is the genus of the Moray eel; however, it is traditional to translate the Latin word as 'lamprey', a very different genus of fish. Moray eels can grow to 3 metres in length and have sharp teeth and wide jaws; however they are often poisonous to eat. Lampreys on the other hand grow up to 1.2 metres and have no jaws, attaching themselves instead to their prey by means of suction: their mouths clamp on the surface of the prey and then they drill into the body and suck out the blood and sometimes the flesh as well.

Lampreys were also popular as food in Roman times. Neither species would normally attack humans, but there have been recorded attacks by



Figure 11 The lamprey uses its suction cup mouth to latch onto its prey and feed for a prolonged time.

lampreys when starved. Which type of fish is meant here is therefore difficult to establish, but on balance the lamprey seems more likely because of its eating habits and the fact that it was also good to eat.

**eos:** i.e. the slaves.

**2-3 qui se aliquid offenderant:** the standard rules require *eum* in a relative clause when referring to the subject of the main clause; here the reflexive is used instead, showing a weakening of the rules. *aliquid* is an accusative of respect: lit. 'with respect to anything'.

**3 in vivarium:** this means an enclosure for keeping any sort of living creature in, and so here 'fishpond'.

**quid aliud quam serpentium:** lit. 'what other (could it be) than (a pond) of snakes'. *serpentium* is an interesting word, in that it appears to be parallel to *vivarium*, as if there is a word *serpentium* meaning snake-pond; however there is no such word as *serpentium*, and so the form has to be the genitive plural of *serpens*, unless Seneca deliberately coined the word here. Seneca is suggesting that being eaten by snakes would be worse than being eaten by lampreys, but in fact snakes are less likely to eat humans in the way described. Perhaps for Seneca snakes had a worse reputation than lampreys.

**4 o hominem:** exclamatory accusative.

**mille mortibus:** ablative dependent on *dignum*, to be translated as if genitive.

**4-5 sive ... sive:** 'whether ... or', introducing two alternative conditional clauses.

**devorandos:** 'to be devoured', a gerundive of obligation.

**5 muraenis:** because of its position, more likely to be dative after *obiciebat* than ablative of the agent after *devorandos*.

**quas esurus erat:** *esurus* is the future participle of the irregular verb *edo, esse, edi, esus*; *quas* refers to the lampreys, 'which he was about to eat'. Some ancient writers relating this story made the point that Vedius Pollio quickly ate the lampreys after they had sucked the blood out of a slave, so that they would still have the slave's blood inside them.

**in hoc tantum:** 'for this purpose alone', defined by *ut sic aleret*.

**6 ut sic aleret:** the key word is *sic*: 'he fed them in order to feed them in this (particular) way', i.e. with the bodies of slaves.

### *Discussion*

This was a well-known story, often used as an example of unacceptable treatment of slaves. In the sentence following this extract, Seneca says that such cruel masters are detested by the citizens, and in the same way the cruelty of kings is recorded throughout history. Thus the story is being used by Seneca as a sort of warning to the young Nero that, like a king, he needs to lead a morally upright life.

More detailed versions of the story recount that when a slave accidentally dropped and broke a valuable cup during a meal to which Augustus had been invited, the horrified emperor not only forbade Pollio from throwing the slave to the lampreys, but also ordered his entire collection of valuable cups to be smashed.

The fact that this and similar stories of brutal treatment of slaves by their masters were so frequently told is an indication that such abuse was not considered normal, i.e. that most masters treated their slaves humanely.

### Questions

1. What point is Seneca making in this passage?
2. How successfully does he show his feelings?



Figure 12 Coin with Augustus on one side and Vedius Pollio on the other.