

62. Argentarius Once More

Μήνη χρυσόκερως, δέρκηι τάδε, καὶ πυριλαμπεῖς
ἀστέρες οὐς κόλποις Ὠκεανὸς δέχεται,
ὥς με μόνον προλιποῦσα μυρόπνοος ὤιχετ' Ἀρίστη,
ἐκταίην δ' εὐρεῖν τὴν μάγον οὐ δύναμαι;
ἀλλ' ἔμπησ αὐτὴν ζητήσομεν· ἦν, ἐπιπέμψω
Κύπριδος ἰχνευτὰς ἀργυρέους σκύλακας.

Golden-horned moon and fire-bright stars whom Ocean
receives in her bosom, do you see these things, how myrrh-
breathing Ariste has gone away and left me alone, and now
for a sixth day I cannot find the witch? But still I will seek
her out: look, I will send the silver sleuth-hounds of
Aphrodite after her.

(Notes on next page.)

This is Argentarius I G-P, epigram V, 16 in the Greek Anthology. I can do no better than to quote R. G. M. Nisbet's analysis ('*Felicitas at Surrentum*', JRS 68 [1978] 1-11 = *Collected Papers on Latin Literature*, Oxford 1995, 29-46):

"Here the forlorn lover's address to the heavenly bodies is made an occasion for point rather than feeling. When the fiery stars are received in the gulf of Ocean, there is not only an antithesis between fire and water but an implicit contrast with the less welcoming κόλπος of the poet's beloved. Ariste is called a witch not simply for her bewitching qualities (Gow-Page) but because she has worked a disappearing trick, not on the moon (as witches often do) but on herself. Then with a characteristically cynical climax the poet promises to send his silver sleuth-hounds after her: ἀργυρέους is a parody of ἀργούς, the Homeric epithet for dogs, and balances the golden horn in the first line (the moon, like the stars, is better off than the poet). Small . . . and Gow-Page comment that 'silver sleuths' seems to be an original metaphor for money, but that does not bring out the full force of the concluding epigram: Argentarius *suo more* is playing on his own name."

I would add only a numismatic query: would silver coins of Argentarius' time have been stamped with images of dogs — or a certain she-wolf? That would be even more pointed.

Source: Text and translation taken from *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip*, ed. A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page (Cambridge, 2 volumes, 1968).

63. Animal Rights

Σχολαστικὸς μετὰ δύο ἐταίρων διελέγετο. τοῦ ἐνὸς οὖν εἰπόντος ὅτι μὴ δίκαιόν ἐστι πρόβατον σφάζεσθαι· γάλα γὰρ καὶ ἔρια φέρει· καὶ τοῦ ἄλλου εἰπόντος ὅτι μηδὲ βοῦν προσήκει ἀναιρεῖσθαι γάλα παρέχουσαν καὶ ἀροτριῶσαν· ὁ σχολαστικὸς ἔφη μηδὲ χοῖρον δίκαιον εἶναι ἀναιρεῖσθαι ἧπαρ παρέχοντα καὶ οὔθαρ καὶ βουλβάν.

A professor was talking with two friends. One of them said that it is not right to slaughter a sheep, since it brings us milk and wool. The second said that it is not fitting to kill an ox either, since it provides us with milk and plows our fields. The professor said that it is not right to kill a pig either, since it provides us with pork liver and sow's udder and sow's womb.

This is Philogelos 103. Since I interrupted this project, I have acquired the new edition by R. D. Dawe (K. G. Saur, 2000), which I quote. The cuts of pork mentioned were all Roman favorites, and may be quite tasty, for all I know. They don't seem to be sold in ordinary grocery stores today, though I suppose a specialty butcher could provide them on request, and pork liver should not be too hard to find. See December 1st for other possible translations of *σχολαστικός*, "professor".

64. An Invitation Declined

Tu Setina quidem semper vel Massica ponis,
Papyle, sed rumor tam bona vina negat:
diceris hac factus caelebs quater esse lagona.
nec puto nec credo, Papyle, nec sitio.

You serve the best wines always, my dear sir,
And yet they say your wines are not so good.
They say you are four times a widower.
They say . . . A drink? I don't believe I would.

This is Martial 4.69, loosely but elegantly translated by J. V. Cunningham. He leaves out the proper names, which mean nothing to us. As usual in Martial, Papyrus is the fictional name of a fictional target. Setine and Massic wines were widely admired.

65. A Joke in Vergil

Parcius ista viris tamen obicienda memento.
novimus et qui te transversa tumentibus hircis
et quo (sed faciles Nymphae risere) sacello.

Think twice before you utter these complaints against a *man*.
I know who was with you while the goats looked askance,
and in what shrine—but the complacent nymphs just laughed.

Vergil is not normally thought of as a humorous writer, but there are a few jokes in the more rustic passages, particularly in the odd-numbered (dialogue) *Eclogues* where he can put them in the mouths of his rustic characters. This is 3.7-9, where Damoetas replies to an accusation of thievery by questioning Menalcas' masculinity. Text and translation are from the H. R. Faircloth's Loeb, as revised in 1999 by G. P. Goold.

Though impossible to translate literally, the Latin is even nastier than the English: literally not "I know who was with you" but "I know who [verb omitted] you". There is more than one possibility for the verb, though all are obscene and (by ancient standards) degrading. The fact that *te* ("you") is object rather than subject, and that the subject *qui* ("who") is masculine, is crucial. That *qui* could as easily be plural as singular makes it even worse. A friend once pointed out that goats actually do look askance at people they are 'sizing up' as possible dangers, and we wrote a paper on the subject called (what else?) "When Goats Look Askance". I plan to add the text to my 'Publications' page some day.

66. More Martial

Non de vi neque caede nec veneno,
sed lis est mihi de tribus capellis:
vicini queror has abesse furto.
hoc iudex sibi postulat probari:
tu Cannas Mithridaticumque bellum
et periuria Punici furoris
et Sullas Mariosque Muciosque
magna voce sonas manuque tota.
iam dic, Postume, de tribus capellis.

It's not a case of poisoned cup,
Assault, or slitting throats;
I've had to have my neighbour up
For stealing my three goats.

You dwell on Punic faith and fury,
Pontic wars, and Cannas,
But this they're asking on the jury,
"Prove he stole the nannies."

And now with gestures various
You've told in ringing notes
Of Sulla, Mucius, Marius,
Please mention my three goats.

This is Martial 6.19, loosely but elegantly translated by T. W. Melluish. It is addressed to a long-winded advocate, 'Postumus' in the Latin, unnamed in the English. Line 3 is British for "I've had to sue my neighbor". The rest is self-explanatory.

67. Even More Martial

Profecit poto Mithridates saepe veneno
toxica ne possent saeva nocere sibi.
tu quoque cavisti cenando tam male semper
ne posses umquam, Cinna, perire fame.

By daily sipping poison Mithridates used to think
In time he'd make himself immune from any deadly drink.
And you take like precautions, too, if that's your daily dinner:
At least you'll never die of hunger, miserable Cinna.

This is Martial 5.76, translated by T. W. Mollish. By a happy coincidence, he is able to pun on 'Cinna' and 'sinner' in the last word.

68. Another Silly Pedant

Σχολαστικὸς κολυμβῶν παρὰ μικρὸν ἐπνίγη· ὤμοσε δὲ εἰς ὕδωρ μὴ εἰσελθεῖν, ἐὰν μὴ μάθῃ πρῶτον καλῶς κολυμβᾶν.

A professor nearly drowned while swimming; he swore that he would not enter the water again, before first learning how to swim well.

This is Philogelos 2. In his essay on Milton (1843), Macaulay used this joke or one just like it to illustrate his argument:

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learnt to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait for ever.

69. A Martial Miniature

Uxorem nolo Telesinam ducere: quare?
moecha est. sed pueris dat Telesina. volo.

I won't marry Betty: she's too fond of men.
"Well, boys find her charming." I'll marry her then.

This is Martial 2.49, translated by F. A. Wright. The Latin is rather cruder than the English: boys find Telesina more than just charming.

70. More Scholastic Humor

Σχολαστικὸς ἐρευνῶν ποῦ ὀφείλει ἑαυτῷ κτίσαι οἶκημα, εἰπόντων δὲ τινῶν ὅτι καλὸν <ἂν> εἶη ὧδέ που, ἔφη· Ἀλλὰ νοσώδης ὁ τόπος.

A professor was inquiring where he ought to build himself a tomb: when some people said that it would look good in a certain place, he said “But the area is unhealthy.”

This is Philogelos 26, as supplemented by R. D. Dawe.

71. Cunningham's Martial Once More

Ne valeam, si non totis, Deciane, diebus
et tecum totis noctibus esse velim.
sed duo sunt quae nos disiungunt milia passum:
quattuor haec fiunt, cum rediturus eam.
saepe domi non es; cum sis quoque, saepe negaris:
vel tantum causis vel tibi saepe vacas.
te tamen ut videam, duo milia non piget ire;
ut te non videam, quattuor ire piget.

Believe me, sir, I'd like to spend whole days,
Yes, and whole evenings in your company,
But the two miles between your house and mine
Are four miles when I go there and come back.
You're seldom home, and when you are deny it,
Engrossed with business or with yourself.
Now, I don't mind the two mile trip to see you;
What I do mind is going four to not to.

This is Martial 2.5, translated by J. V. Cunningham. Is trisyllabic 'business' in line 6 of the translation an etymological pun, not 'bizness' but 'busy-ness'? I think it is. The denial in line 5 is delivered by the door-keeper slave, the *ianitor*: the addressee (Decianus in the Latin) doesn't actually deny to Martial's face that he is home.

72. Aristophanes on Euripides' Style

ὄξωτά, σιλφιωτά, βολβός, τευτλίον,
περίκομμα, θροῖον, ἐγκέφαλος, ὀρίγανον,
καταπυγοςύνη ταῦτ' ἐστὶ πρὸς κρέας μέγα.

Vinegar, devil's dung, onion, beet,
mincemeat, figcake, brains, oregano:
these are buggery for big meat.

This is Fragment 130 or 131 – there seems to be some doubt, and I have no edition at hand to check. I found it on page 84 of Emily Gowers, *The Loaded Table: Representation of Food in Roman Literature* (Oxford, 1993). 'Big meat' seems (oddly) to mean meat that is 'high' or has 'gone off', and 'buggery' is a coarse metaphor for culinary 'stuffing' (the act, not the substance). The metaphor seems sufficient to count this as an ancient joke.

As Gowers notes, "If this had survived in isolation, we would assume that it was yet another ordinary shopping-list. As it is, we have a context for it. Diogenes Laertius [4.18] tells us that it is a description of the style of Euripides, a poet who was pilloried for his own contamination of tragic language with the mundane The steaks of Aeschylus have turned into Euripides' bitter olla podrida."

73. On a Deadly Doctor

Τοῦ λιθίνου Διὸς ἐχθρὸς ὁ κλινικὸς ἤψατο Μάρκος·
καὶ λίθος ὢν καὶ Ζεὺς, σήμερον ἐκφέρεται.

Yesterday Doctor Marcus touched a stone Zeus.
Though stone and Zeus, he has his funeral today.

This is epigram XI.113 in the *Greek Anthology*, by Nicarchus, last (and first) seen in Joke 20. Ancient worshippers touched the feet of statues of gods while praying, and doctors of course laid their hands on their patients to check their pulse, temperature, and so on. The last verb is literally ‘is carried out’, *sc.* to his funeral.

74. Vespasian on Money

Reprehendenti filio Tito, quod etiam urinae vectigal commentus esset, pecuniam ex prima pensione admovit ad nares, sciscitans num odore offenderetur; et illo negante; ‘Atqui’, inquit, ‘e lotio est.’

When Titus criticized him because he had even contrived a tax on urine, he held up some money from the first payment to his son’s nose, asking whether he was offended by the odor; and when he said “No”, he replied “Yet it comes from urine”.

A well-known joke, sometimes quoted in Latin even today in the form *pecunia non olet*, “money doesn’t stink”. I do not know if there is any ancient authority for that version. My text and some bits of the translation are quote from the Loeb edition of Suetonius (*Vespasian* 23.3) by John C. Rolfe, as revised and updated by Donna W. Hurley (1997). Other Flavian jests from the same chapter will provide fodder for later posts.

I have read somewhere that Vespasian’s urinal tax was not quite the same thing as the modern pay toilet. Ancient fullers collected urine to use in cleaning clothes by setting tubs in alleys for the use of (male) passersby. There was no charge, since the arrangement was equally advantageous to fuller and passerby. (No, I do not know how something so filthy could be used to clean things: perhaps I should consult a chemist.) Vespasian, if I’m not mistaken, taxed the fullers for their use of public alleys, not the men who filled their tubs.

75. More Martial

Pexatus pulchre rides mea, Zoile, trita.
sunt haec trita quidem, Zoile, sed mea sunt.

In velvet clad, and lace so fine,
You scorn this thread-bare suit of mine.
— Thread-bare I grant ye, Mr. Beau,
— But then — 'twas paid for long ago.

This is Martial 2.58, translated, expansively and not recently, by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed. *Pexatus* means 'having a nap', which is indeed the opposite of threadbare, even if English has no easy way to express the meaning. If you are having trouble scanning the elegiac couplet, note that *Zoilus* is trisyllabic.

76. Quick Thinking

⁴Mos antea senatoribus Romae fuit in curiam cum praetextatis filiis introire. ⁵Tum, cum in senatu res maior quaedam consultata eaque in diem posterum prolata est, placuitque, ut eam rem, super qua tractavissent, ne quis enuntiaret, priusquam decreta esset, mater Papirii pueri, qui cum parente suo in curia fuerat, percontata est filium, quidnam in senatu patres egissent. ⁶Puer respondit tacendum esse neque id dici licere. ⁷Mulier fit audiendi cupidior; secretum rei et silentium pueri animum eius ad inquirendum everberat: quaerit igitur compressius violentiusque. ⁸Tum puer matre urgente lepidi atque festivi mendacii consilium capit. Actum in senatu dixit, utrum videretur utilius exque republica esse, unusne ut duas uxores haberet, an ut una apud duos nupta esset. ⁹Hoc illa ubi audivit, animus compavescit, domo trepidans egreditur ad ceteras matronas. ¹⁰Pervenit ad senatum postridie matrum familias caterva; lacrimantes atque obsecrantes orant, una potius ut duobus nupta fieret, quam ut uni duae. ¹¹Senatores ingredientes in curiam, quae illa mulierum intemperies et quid sibi postulatio istaec vellet, mirabantur. ¹²Puer Papirius in medium curiae progressus, quid mater audire institisset, quid ipse matri dixisset, rem, sicut fuerat, denarrat. ¹³Senatus fidem atque ingenium pueri exosculatur, consultum facit, uti posthac pueri cum patribus in curiam ne introeant, praeter ille unus Papirius, atque puero postea cognomentum honoris gratia inditum "Praetextatus" ob tacendi loquendique in aetate praetextae prudentiam.

(Translation and Notes on next page.)

⁴It was formerly the custom at Rome for senators to enter the House with their sons under age. ⁵In those days, when a matter of considerable importance had been discussed and was postponed to the following day, it was voted that no one should mention the subject of the debate until the matter was decided. The mother of the young Papirius, who had been in the House with his father, asked her son what the Fathers had taken up in the senate. ⁶The boy replied that it was a secret and that he could not tell. ⁷The woman became all the more eager to hear about it; the secrecy of the matter and the boy's silence piqued her curiosity; she therefore questioned him more pressingly and urgently. ⁸Then the boy, because of his mother's insistence, resorted to a witty and amusing falsehood. He said that the senate had discussed the question whether it seemed more expedient, and to the advantage of the State, for one man to have two wives or one woman to have two husbands. ⁹On hearing this, she is panic-stricken, rushes excitedly from the house, and carries the news to the other matrons. ¹⁰Next day a crowd of matrons came to the senate, imploring with tears and entreaties that one woman might have two husbands rather than one man two wives. ¹¹The senators, as they entered the House, were wondering at this strange madness of the women and the meaning of such a demand, ¹¹when young Papirius, stepping forward to the middle of the House, told in detail what his mother had insisted on hearing, what he himself had said to her, in fact, the whole story exactly as it had happened. ¹³The senate paid homage to the boy's cleverness and loyalty, but voted that thereafter boys should not enter the House with their fathers, save only this Papirius; and the boy was henceforth honoured with the surname *Praetextatus*, because of his discretion in keeping silent and in speaking, while he was still young enough to wear the purple-bordered gown.

This is Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 1.23.5-13, with John C. Rolfe's Loeb translation. I have omitted Gellius' introduction. The point of the name change is that boys wore the purple-bordered *toga praetexta*, and were therefore *praetextati*.

77. A Squib Fit for a King

Brutus, quia reges eiecit, consul primus factus est:
hic, quia consules eiecit, rex postremus factus est.

Brutus, because he threw out the kings, became the first consul. This man, because he threw out the consuls, has become the latest/last king.

These lines (trochaic septenarians) are irretrievably anonymous but securely datable to the first few months of 44 B.C. According to Suetonius in his life of Julius Caesar (80.3), someone wrote them on Caesar's statue shortly before he was assassinated.

There is some doubt about the text. In both lines, it is possible that *quia* should be *qui* ("Brutus, *who* threw out . . . This man, *who* . . ."). In the second line, *postremus* is my conjecture (*Museum Criticum* XX, 1997) for the manuscripts' *postremo*, which means "finally, in the end". Caesar has added himself to the list of kings of Rome, eighth after – long after – Tarquinius Superbus. But there is more to it than that: our anonymous patriot hopes that he will be not only the *latest* but the *last* king of Rome because he will soon be assassinated, and no one will dare emulate him. He got half his wish: his target was soon 'the late' Julius Caesar, but was of course succeeded by dozens more kings-in-all-but-name.

78. An Ancient One-Liner

Φιλάργυρος διαθήκας γράφων ἑαυτὸν κληρονόμον
ἔταξεν.

A greedy man writing his will made himself his own heir.

Philogelos 104. Short and sweet: no explanation necessary?

79. More of Cunningham's Martial

Amissum non flet cum sola est Gellia patrem,
si quis adest, iussae prosiliunt lacrimae.
non luget quisquis laudari, Gellia, quaerit;
ille dolet vere qui sine teste dolet.

In private she mourns not the late-lamented;
If someone's by her tears leap forth on call.
Sorrow, my dear, is not so easily rented.
They are true tears that without witness fall.

This is Martial 1.33, not precisely a joke, but neatly translated
by J. V. Cunningham. The meter is elegiac couplets.

80. I've Been There

Σχολαστικὸς εὐτράπελος ἀπορῶν δαπανημάτων τὰ βιβλία αὐτοῦ ἐπίπρασκε, καὶ γράφων πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἔλεγε· Σύγχαιρε ἡμῖν, πάτερ· ἤδη γὰρ ἡμᾶς τὰ βιβλία τρέφει.

A witty scholar, having no means of paying his bills, sold his books. Writing to his father, he said: “Congratulate me, father. I’m already living off my books.”

Philogelos 55. Of course, the last line purports to mean “I’m already making a living from my education”.

81. Not Thinking Things Through

Σχολαστικῶ ἐκ δούλης τεκνώσαντι ὁ πατήρ συνεβού-
λευε τὸ παιδίον ἀποκτεῖναι. ὁ δὲ Πρωῶτον, ἔφη, σὺ τὰ
τέκνα σου κατόρυξον, καὶ οὕτως ἐμοὶ συμβούλευε τὸν
ἐμὸν ἀνελεῖν.

When a scholar had a child by a slave-girl, his father kept
advising him to kill it. But he said, “First bury your own chil-
dren, then you can advise me to do away with my own.”

Philogelos 57. The implied social background is alien and re-
pulsive: an unwanted child can be killed and the mother, both
as slave and as woman, has no say in the decision.

82. A Mushroom Joke, But Not Poisonous

Boleti

Argentum atque aurum facile est laenamque togamque
mittere; boletos mittere difficile est.

Mushrooms

To give silver and gold and a cloak and a toga is easy. To
give mushrooms is difficult.

Martial 13.48. Like the rest of Books XIII (*Xenia*) and XIV (*Apophoreta*), this is one of the two-line epigrams Martial wrote to accompany Saturnalia presents. The verb is literally 'send', not 'give', since the presents were delivered by slaves.

Boleti are not just any kind of mushroom, still less the short fat ones we put on pizzas, but the Romans' favorite variety, said to be the same as modern *porcini*. I take it that the point is that the other four gifts, though more valuable in themselves, would have been easily replaced, unlike a basket of unusually tasty mushrooms. Still, the implied sender sounds a bit like Homer Simpson, someone who would sooner give you his coat or his wallet than his jelly donut.

83. A Joke About a Nose

Ἄντιον ἡελίου στήσας ῥίνα καὶ στόμα χάσκων
δείξεις τὰς ὥρας πᾶσι παρερχομένοις.

Stand with your nose facing the sun and your mouth open, and you'll show the hours to all who pass by.

A man with a big nose would make an excellent sundial. He must open his mouth so his teeth can provide the hour-markings. This little squib (*Greek Anthology* 11.418) is attributed to the emperor Trajan, of all people. Whoever wrote it seems to have botched it at one point: ῥίνα, “nose” should have a long iota, but only scans if it is short here. Various possible solutions to the textual problem are outlined by Gideon Nisbet in *Greek Epigram in the Roman Empire: Martial's Forgotten Rivals* (Oxford, 2002), 196 n 30.

84. Caesar Insults a Gouty Man

Vatinio in prima sua aetate eleganter insultavit. contusus ille podagra volebat tamen videri discussisse iam vitium, et mille passus ambulare se gloriabatur. cui Caesar, *non miror*, inquit, *dies aliquando sunt longiores*.

In his first youth he elegantly mocked Vatinius. Though broken down by gout, Vatinius nevertheless wished to appear to have shaken off his handicap and kept boasting that he was walking a mile. To which Caesar said, "I'm not surprised: the days are getting somewhat longer."

This is Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 2.4.16. Vatinius was the butt of someone else's joke in § 47. I take it from the tense of *ambulare* that Vatinius is walking a mile every day. I suppose to a wealthy Roman with the ancient equivalent of a chauffeured limousine at his command, that might seem a fair distance.

85. Another Poindexter

Σχολαστικὸς εἰς οἰκίαν καινὴν μετοικισθεὶς καὶ τὰ
πρὸ τοῦ πυλῶνος καθήρας ἐπέγραψεν· Ὅς ἂν ᾧδε
κόπρια βάλῃ ἀπόλλυσιν αὐτά.

Having moved into a new house and cleaned up in front of the door, a poindexter wrote on it: “Whoever throws crap here will not get it back.”

This is Philogelos 85. The point is not entirely unlike that of Philogelos 19 (§ 34). A modern congener from 40+ years ago is the mythical want ad: “Garbagemen needed. Twenty dollars a week and all you can eat.”

I use ‘crap’ for *κόπρια* since the basic meaning is ‘excrement’ but it can also mean any kind of dirt or filth. “Will not get it back” is literally “loses it”, but that seemed too obscure, so I borrowed the phrasing of Barry Baldwin’s translation (Amsterdam, 1983).

86. Simonides on Timocreon

πολλὰ πιῶν καὶ πολλὰ φαγῶν καὶ πολλὰ κάκ' εἰπῶν
ἀνθρώπους κεῖμαι Τιμοκρέων Ῥόδιος.

Having drunk many things and eaten many things and spoken many slanders about people, I lie here, Timocreon of Rhodes.

Preserved in the Greek Anthology (7.348) and Athenaeus' *Dipnosophists* (10.415f), this epigram is Simonides 37 in D. L. Page's *Further Greek Epigrams* (1981) and his Oxford Classical Text of the *Epigrammata Graeca*, 167 and 99 in the editions of Th. Bergk and E. Diehl. A mock-epitaph, it lists Timocreon's vices as if they were athletic or military triumphs. He had quite a few genuine achievements to his name: he was a poet, a pentathlete, and a friend and later enemy of Themistocles. The meter is elegiac. The scribe of the manuscript added "my uncle had exactly the same attitude and character". As Page remarks (*FGE*), "I do not recall a stranger note in the *Anthology*".

87.

‘Thaïda Quintus amat.’ ‘Quam Thaïda?’ ‘Thaïda luscam.’
Unum oculum Thaïs non habet, ille duos.

“Quintus is in love with Thais.” “Which Thais?” “One-eyed Thais.” Thais is missing one eye, but he’s missing both.

Martial 3.8, an elegiac couplet. Jokes about the one-eyed are quite popular in Latin.

88. Yet Another Poindexter

Σχολαστικῶ ἑταῖρος ἀπαντήσας Συγχαίρω σοι, εἶπεν,
ὅτι σοι παιδίον ἐγεννήθη. ὁ δὲ ἀπεκρίνατο· Ταῦτα
ὑμεῖς οἱ φίλοι ποιεῖτε.

Running into a poindexter, a friend said “I congratulate you on the birth of your son.” To which he replied “Yes, thanks to all my friends!”

Philogelos 98. I have borrowed Barry Baldwin’s translation of the reply.

89. A Royal Retort

Alcaeus of Messene on Philip V:

Ἄκλαυτοι καὶ ἄθαπτοι, ὄδοιπόρε, τῷδ' ἐπὶ νώτῳ
 Θεσσαλίας τρισσαὶ κείμεθα μυριάδες,
 Ἡμαδίη μέγα πῆμα· τὸ δὲ θρασὺ κείνο Φιλίππου
 πνεῦμα δοῶν ἐλάφῳ ὄχετ' ἐλαφρότερον.

Philip on Alcaeus:

Ἄφλοιος καὶ ἄφυλλος, ὄδοιπόρε, τῷδ' ἐπὶ νώτῳ
 Ἄλκαίου σταυρὸς πῆγνυται ἠλίβατος.

Alcaeus:

Unwept and unburied, o traveler, we thirty thousand lie on
 this ridge of Thessaly, a great sorrow to Macedonia; but that
 bold spirit of Philip has departed, nimbler than the swift deer.

Philip:

Barkless and leafless, o traveler, a tall stake is fixed in this
 back of Alcaeus.

Philip lost his 30,000 men fighting the Romans under Titus Flamininus at Cynoscephalae in 197 B.C. Alcaeus mocks him with a pseudo-epitaph for the dead soldiers, who in fact lay unburied for the next six years, and Philip retorts with a threat of impalement. The sources are the *Greek Anthology* (7.247) and Plutarch's *Lives* (*Flamininus*, 9), respectively. There are difficulties in both poems, and I have chosen a text that will make them more rather than less parallel. In Alcaeus' poem, "ridge" also means "back", "spirit" also means "breath", and the deer (if it matters) are plural.

90. More Martial

Auriculam Mario graviter miraris olere.

Tu facis hoc: garris, Nestor, in auriculam.

You are astonished that Marius' ear stinks.

You're responsible, Nestor: you whisper in his ear.

This is 3.28. Martial is as fond of bad-breath jokes as one-eye jokes.

91. A Boaster for a Change

Ἄλαζών ἐν ἀγορᾷ παῖδα ἑαυτοῦ θεασάμενος ἐκ τοῦ ἀγροῦ νεωστὶ ἐληλυθότα εἶπε· Τί ποιοῦσι τὰ πρόβατα; ὁ δὲ εἶπε· Τὸ μὲν καθεύδει, τὸ δὲ ἐφίσταται.

A boastful man in the marketplace, catching sight of his slave just arrived from the country, said “How are my sheep doing?” To which he replied “One’s asleep, the other’s standing up.”

Philogelos 108.

92. An Ignorant Teacher

Ἄφυγς γραμματικὸς, ἐρωτηθεὶς Ἡ μήτηρ Πριάμου
τίς ἐκαλεῖτο, ἀπορῶν ἔφη· Ἡμεῖς κατὰ τιμὴν κυρίαν
αὐτὴν καλοῦμεν.

Asked what Priam's mother was called, an incompetent teacher, being at a loss, said "Out of respect, we call her ma'am".

Philogelos 197. Stumping the teacher with obscure mythological puzzles seems to have been popular among some of the more annoying ancients. Suetonius tells us (*Tib.* 70.3) that the Emperor Tiberius was one of them. Juvenal mentions the practice in his *Satires* (7.232-36), and Courtney's commentary gives numerous parallels. Despite his abundant information on mythological matters, Apollodorus in his *Library* doesn't seem to say who Priam's mother was, though everyone knows that his father was Laomedon.