

1. Hippon's Epitaph

Ἴππωνος τόδε σῆμα, τὸν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν
ἴσον ἐποίησεν Μοῖρα καταφθίμενον.

This is the tomb of Hippon, whom, when he died, Fate made equal to the immortal gods.

or

This is the tomb of Hippon, whom Fate made just as dead as the immortal gods.

This epigram, ‘Hippon 1’ in the standard collection, purports to be our only surviving verbal fragment of the works of Hippon of Samos. It is generally thought to be spurious. Hippon, nicknamed ‘the Atheist’, was a natural philosopher of the age of Pericles. He is perhaps best known today — insofar as he is known at all — as the target of a passing slur in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. After listing the philosophers who made Water the first principle of the universe, Aristotle adds (A 3, 948a): “No one would think it proper to include Hippon among these thinkers, because of the second-rateness of his thought.”

The epigram includes a pun that depends on the ambiguity of the two accusatives in line 2. My first translation gives the primary meaning, which takes ἴσον, ‘equal’, as the predicate, with καταφθίμενον, ‘having died’, a circumstantial participle. The second translation gives the secondary meaning, with ἴσον now an adverb (‘equally’) and καταφθίμενον (‘dead’) the predicate.

Text and commentary in D. L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams* (Cambridge, 1981), 157.

2. Gellius and the Philosophers of Athens

. . . me Athenis audire ex Phaedro meo memini Gellium, familiarem tuum, cum pro consule ex praetura in Graeciam venisset essetque Athenis, philosophos, qui tum erant, in locum unum convocasse ipsisque magno opere auctorem fuisse, ut aliquando controversiarum aliquem facerent modum; quodsi essent eo animo, ut nollent aetatem in litibus conterere, posse rem convenire; et simul operam suam illis esse pollicitum, si posset inter eos aliquid convenire.

Atticus: 'I recall hearing the following story in Athens from my friend Phaedrus about your friend Gellius. When he had arrived in Greece as proconsul after his praetorship and was in Athens, he called together the philosophers who were there at the time, and urgently advised them to come at last to some settlement of their disagreements. He said that if they did not wish to waste their lives in argument, the matter could be settled, and at the same time he promised his own best efforts to aid them in coming to some agreement.'

The story is told in Cicero's dialogue *On Laws (De Legibus)*. The speaker is Atticus, his addressee Marcus Cicero — both characters in the latter's dialogue —, and the subject Lucius Gellius, Roman proconsul of Athens. Phaedrus was one of the contemporary philosophers. Whether Gellius was a fool or a wit is still disputed.

Source: Cicero, *De Legibus* 1.53.

Translation: adapted from C. W. Keyes' Loeb (Harvard, 1927).

3. Diogenes on Plato's Man

Πλάτωνος ὀρισσαμένου ἄνθρωπος ἐστὶ ζῶιον δίπουν ἄπτερον' καὶ εὐδοκιμοῦντος, τίλας ἀλεκτρούνα εἰσήνεγκεν αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν σχολὴν καὶ φησιν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Πλάτωνος ἄνθρωπος'. ὅθεν τῷ ὄρωι προσετέθη τὸ πλατυώνυχον.

When Plato had defined Man as a featherless biped, and was admired for it, he plucked a chicken and brought it into the lecture-room and said "Here is Plato's Man". After that, 'broad-nailed' was added to the definition.

The subject is Diogenes the founder of the Cynic school, who lived in a tub and went around with a lantern looking for an honest man, just to mention the most famous stories about him. This may be his best joke, but it will not be the last to be included in this series. The Greek actually specifies a male fowl, but 'chicken' sounds funnier in English than 'rooster' and less ambiguous than 'cock'.

Source: Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, VI, 40.

4. Diogenes on the Rights of the Wise

συνελογίζετο δὲ καὶ οὕτως· τῶν θεῶν ἐστὶ πάντα·
φίλοι δὲ οἱ σοφοὶ τοῖς θεοῖς· κοινὰ δὲ τὰ τῶν φίλων.
πάντ' ἄρα ἐστὶ τῶν σοφῶν.

He used to reason as follows: All things belong to the gods.
The wise are friends of the gods. The things of friends are
common. Therefore all things belong to the wise.

As in Joke 3, the subject is Diogenes the Cynic philosopher. The Greek is quite simple and straightforward and would make a good translation exercise in a first-year Greek course. Literally, 'he used to syllogize as follows', but this is not what later logicians called a syllogism, since it has four parts instead of three. The three premises are all clichés of Greek popular philosophy, but the conclusion is original, and the logic seems sound. 'The things of friends are common' means that a true friend is one who can treat your property as if it were his own. Was Diogenes the first instance of the kind of intellectual who thinks the world owes him (or her) a living?

Source: Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, VI, 37.

5. The Elder Julia on Sex and Pregnancy

Cumque conscii flagitiorum mirarentur quo modo similes Agrippae filios pareret, quae tam vulgo potestatem corporis sui faceret, ait: ‘numquam enim nisi navi plena tollo vectorem’. Simile dictum Populiae Marci filiae, quae miranti cuidam, quid esset quapropter aliae bestiae numquam marem desiderarent nisi cum praegnantes vellent fieri, respondit: ‘bestiae enim sunt’.

And when those who knew of her infidelities were amazed how she, who was so free of her favors, bore children who looked like [her husband] Agrippa, she said: “I never take a passenger on board until the ship is full [of cargo]”. The saying of Populia, daughter of Marcus [Populius], is similar. When someone asked in surprise why it was that among the other animals the females desired a mate only when they wished to become pregnant, she replied: “Because they’re animals”.

Two jokes in one passage. The subject of the first sentence is the Elder Julia, promiscuous daughter of the emperor Augustus, who eventually banished her to a small island. Macrobius devotes an entire chapter to her, ending with these two jokes. Though both refer to pregnancy, the two do not seem to have much else in common.

Source: Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, II, 5, 9-10.

6. A Ciceronian *Bon Mot*

M. Cicero cum apud Damasippum cenaret et ille mediocri vino posito diceret ‘bibite Falernum hoc, annorum quadraginta est’, ‘bene’, inquit, ‘aetatem fert’.

When Marcus Cicero was dining at the house of Damasippus, the host served a very ordinary wine and said: “Drink this Falernian, it is forty years old”. Cicero said: “Young for its age.”

This is the first of the many *dicta Ciceronis* in Macrobius’ chapter. Falernian was the best and most expensive Roman wine. More literally, Cicero says: “It carries its age well.”

Source: Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, II, 3, 2.

Translation adapted from Percival Vaughan Davies, *Macrobius: The Saturnalia*, New York and London, 1969.

7. Julian the Apostate on Beer

Τίς πόθεν εἶς, Διόνυσε; μὰ γὰρ τὸν ἀληθέα Βάκχον,
οὐ σ' ἐπιγιγνώσκω· τὸν Διὸς οἶδα μόνον.
κεῖνος νέκταρ ὄδωδε, σὺ δὲ τράγον. ἦ ῥά σε Κελτοί
ἠπανίηι βοτρυῶν τεύχαν ἀπ' ἀσταχύων.
τῶι σε χρὴ καλέειν Δεμήτριον, οὐ Διόνυσον.
πυρογενῆ μᾶλλον, καὶ Βρόμον, οὐ Βρόμιον.

Who are you, and whence, Dionysus? For by the true Bacchus,
I do not recognize you: I know only the son of Zeus.
He smells of nectar, you smell of the goat. Truly the Celts must have
made you from grain only for lack of grapes.
Therefore we should call you Demetrios, not Dionysos.
rather born of grain [than of fire], and Bromos, not Bromios.

The epigram is IX, 638 in the *Greek Anthology*. Text and commentary in D. L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams* (Cambridge, 1981), 571-72, where this is Julian I. Julian II, which is stupid and obscene, is probably spurious, so this is our only epigram plausibly attributed to Julian. Its puns are worthy of Marcus Argentarius.

3. It is obvious how wine resembles nectar, the drink of the gods, but how does beer smell of the goat? Wine was often stored in goatskins: was beer, too? Or does Julian's goat represent a generic nasty smell?

5. 'Demetrios' means 'son of Demeter', as Dionysus was thought to mean 'son of Zeus'. Zeus and Demeter were brother and sister.

6. There is a pun in *πυρογενῆ*, which means 'born of grain' (with a long *υ*) but implies 'born of fire' (with a short *υ*), like the true Dionysos. *Βρόμιος* is a title of Dionysos, and seems to mean 'roarer' or 'noisemaker'. Page notes that ancient beer was not in fact made of oats (*βρόμος*), only wheat, barley, or millet. If Julian knew that, he stretched the truth for the sake of the final pun.

8. Martial on a Foolish Punishment

Abscisa servum quid figis, Pontice, lingua?
nescis tu populum, quod tacet ille, loqui?

Why, Ponticus, do you impale your slave with his tongue cut out?
Don't you know that the people are saying what he cannot?

More literally, the last three words are “what he is silent about”.

Roman masters could do just about anything they wanted to their slaves, Roman husbands just about anything they wanted to anyone caught sleeping with their wives. Though I cannot prove it, I suspect that this epigram falls under both categories. If we wonder what precisely the people are saying, there is more than one possibility. There may also be a hint that Ponticus should have cut off some other body part.

Source: Martial, *Epigrams* II, 83.

Meter: Elegiac couplet.

9. From an Ancient Joke Book

Κυμαῖος μέλι ἐπίπρασκεν. ἐλθόντος δέ τινος καὶ γευσάμενου καὶ εἰπόντος, ὅτι πάνυ καλόν, ἔφη· Εἰ μὴ γὰρ μῦς ἐνέπεσεν εἰς αὐτό, οὐκ ἂν ἐπώλουν.

A man from Kyme was trying to sell some honey. When someone came and tasted it and said that it was very good, the seller said: “Well, yes: if a mouse hadn’t fallen in it, I wouldn’t be selling it!”

The people of ancient Kyme were proverbially stupid. This is just one of the many jokes aimed at them. It is number 173 in the *Philogelos*, an ancient collection of jokes attributed to Hierokles and Philagrios. Very few of the jokes in it are particularly funny, at least to modern ears. This is one of the better ones. See also Jokes 11 and 13. There is a complete translation, with notes, by Barry Baldwin: *The Philogelos or Laughter-Lover*, Amsterdam, 1983.

Source: *Philogelos : Der Lachfreund*, ed. A. Thierfelder, München, 1968.

10. Another joke from Martial

Nihil Ammiano praeter aridam restem
moriens reliquit ultimis pater ceris.
fieri putaret posse quis, Marulline,
ut Ammiánus mortuum patrem nollet?

Ammianus' dying father left him nothing in his will except a dry rope. Who would have thought it could happen, Marullinus, that Ammiánus would wish his father were not dead?

The subject and addressee are equally fictional. Just why Ammiánus should wish his father were still alive is arguable: So he would still live in hope? So he could try to change his father's mind? So he could kill him? There may be other possibilities, and it may be oversubtle even to ask.

Source: Martial, *Epigrams* IV, 70.

Meter: Scazons (limping iambic).

11. Another Fool from Kyme

Ἐν Κύμη ἐπισήμου τινὸς κηδευομένου προσελθὼν τις ἠρώτα τοὺς ὀψικεύοντας· Τίς ὁ τεθνηκώς; εἷς δὲ Κυμαῖος στραφεὶς ὑπεδείκνυε λέγων· Ἐκεῖνος ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης ἀνακείμενος.

When a distinguished man was being buried in Kyme, someone came up and asked the mourners: “Who was the dead man?” One of Kymeans turned around and pointed and said: “That guy lying on the bier.”

From the same source as Joke 9. This is Philogelos 154, the first in the long series of jokes about Kyme (154-182).

12. An Overpriced Roman Fool

Morio dictus erat: viginti milibus emi.
redde mihi nummos, Gargiliane: sapit.

He had been called a fool: I bought him for 20,000 sesterces.
Give me back my money, Gargilianus: he has sense.

The subject is a slave of subnormal intelligence bought for his amusement value: something of a cross between a Mediaeval fool and a pet that does stupid tricks. The social attitudes implied in this epigram are as alien as anything in Martial. The complaint is that the supposed fool is of normal intelligence, and therefore (paradoxically) overpriced. The sum is quite a large one.

Source: Martial, *Epigrams* VIII, 13.

Meter: Elegiac couplet.

13. A Doctor Joke

Κυμαῖος ἰατρὸς τέμνων τινὰ δεινῶς ἀλγοῦντα καὶ
βοῶντα ἀμβλυτέραν σμίλην μετέλαβεν.

A Kymean doctor, operating on someone who was in terrible
pain and crying out, switched to a blunter scalpel.

Not much to explain here, at least for those who know of the proverbial
stupidity of the citizens of ancient Kyme, for which see Jokes 9 and 11.
This is Philogelos 177.

14. Domitian on the Burdens of Power

Conditionem principum miserrimam aiebat, quibus
de coniuratione comperta non crederetur nisi occisis.

He used to say that the condition of emperors was most wretched, since, when a conspiracy had been discovered, no one believed them unless they had been killed.

The tense of the verb shows that Domitian was fond enough of his witticism to repeat it. In the end, he gave everyone reason to believe him, but not before discovering numerous other conspiracies that he survived.

Source: Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars, Domitian*, 21.

15. Marcus Argentarius on Love and Money

Ἡράσθης πλουτῶν, Σωσίκρατες, ἀλλὰ πένης ὦν
οὐκετ' ἐραῖς· λιμὸς φάρμακον οἶον ἔχει.
ἢ δὲ πάρος σε καλεῦσα μύρον καὶ τερπνὸν Ἄδωνιν
Μηνοφίλα νῦν σου τοῦνομα πυνθάνεται,
'τίς πόθεν εἰς ἀνδρῶν; πόθι τοι πτόλις;' ἢ μόλις ἔγνωσ
τοῦτ' ἔπος, ὡς οὐδεὶς οὐδὲν ἔχοντι φίλος.

When you were rich, Sosikrates, you were a lover, but being poor you love no longer. Such a remedy hunger provides. And Menophila, who used to call you her myrrh and her delightful Adonis, now inquires about your name: "What man art thou and whence? Where is thy city?" Truly you have learned this lesson the hard way, that no one is a friend to the one who has nothing.

Marcus Argentarius, who lived in or near the Augustan Age, is one of the most underrated Greek poets. His idea of love is obviously less romantic, more purely sexual, than for most moderns. At least to judge by our popular culture, true love has no need of money.

The comparisons in line 3 seem double-edged. Myrrh is a sweet-smelling incense, but its principal use was in funerals. And Adonis was not only beautiful but doomed to an early death. For the quoted words, I borrow Gow and Page's archaic diction, to reflect the fact that Argentarius (or rather Menophila) is quoting Homer. The assumption that Sosikrates is from out of town is very cutting: it is not so much that she cannot recall his name as that she pretends to be quite certain that she never saw him before.

Source: Text and commentary in *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip*, ed. A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page (Cambridge, 2 volumes, 1968). This is Argentarius IX in Gow-Page, poem V, 113 in the Greek Anthology.

16. More Martial

Nulli, Thai, negas, sed si te non pudet istud,
hoc saltem pudeat, Thai, negare nihil.

You refuse no one, Thais, but if you are not ashamed of that,
you should be ashamed of this, Thais, that you refuse nothing.

Thais was a name used by various courtesans of greater or lesser fame. Martial abuses this particular Thais for her willingness not only to have relations with anyone, but to have any kind of relations with (I suppose) anyone. The phrasing is very neat.

Source: Martial, *Epigrams* IV, 12.

Meter: Elegiac couplet.

17. A Miserly Dinner-Host

Ἐχθρὸς δειπνήσας τράγεον πόδα καὶ δεκαταῖον
καυναβίνης κράμβης μήλινον ἀσπάραγον.
εἰπεῖν τὸν καλέσαντα φυλάσσομαι· ἔστι γὰρ ὀξύς,
καὶ φόβος οὐχ ὁ τυχῶν μή με πάλιν καλέσῃ.

Having dined yesterday on a goat's foot and a ten-day-old yellow-green stalk of hemp-like cabbage, I am taking care not to say who invited me [to dinner]: he is sharp-tempered, and there is an uncommon fear that he may invite me back.

Automedon is known only as the author of eleven satirical epigrams in the Garland of Philip, which puts him between 90 B.C. and 40 A.D. He is one of the more interesting poets in Philip's collection.

Source: Text and commentary in *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip*, ed. A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page (Cambridge, 2 volumes, 1968). This is Automedon VII in Gow-Page, Greek Anthology XI, 325. My translation is adapted from Gow and Page, and I have also borrowed their title.

18. A Couplet of Lucillius

Ἠγόρασας πλοκάμους, φῦκος, μέλι, κηρόν, ὀδόντας·
τῆς αὐτῆς δαπάνης ὄψιν ἂν ἠγόρασας.

You bought braids, rouge, honey, wax, teeth: for the same
expense you could have bought a face.

Lucillius, who wrote under Nero (54-68 A.D.) was a little too late for the Garland of Philip. He greatly influenced Martial, not least by the nastiness and neatness of his wit. In this epigram, the first and last words are identical, but have quite different meanings, since the first ἠγόρασας is a simple past (“you bought”), while the addition of ἂν makes the second unreal (“you could have bought — but didn’t”).

The addressee is presumably feminine. I do not know what the honey is doing in line 1: all of the other items are either cosmetic or prosthetic, and it is not obvious how honey would be used to improve a woman’s looks. It is also unclear whether “braids” means something like modern hair extensions or is used *pars pro toto* for an entire wig.

Source: *Greek Anthology*, XI, 310.

Meter: Elegiac couplet.

19. Varro on Philosophers

postremo nemo aegrotus quicquam somniat
tam infandum, quod non aliquis dicat philosophus.

Finally no sick man dreams anything so unspeakable that
some philosopher would not say it.

Today features two jokes (or at least witty remarks) for the price of one. Cicero says something quite similar in *De Divinatione* 2.58.119: Sed nescio quo modo nihil tam absurde dici potest quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum. "But somehow or other there is nothing that can be said so absurdly, which would not be said by some one of the philosophers."

The Varro is from his satire *Eumenides* (*Menippea* Fr. 122 Buecheler = 155 Cèbe).

Meter: Senarians.

20. Nicarchus on the Imperial Power of Farts

Πορδὴ ἀποκτέννει πολλοὺς ἀδιέξοδος οὔσα·
πορδὴ καὶ σώιζει τραυλὸν ἰεῖσα μέλος.
οὐκοῦν εἰ σώιζει, καὶ ἀποκτέννει πάλι πορδὴ,
τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ἴσην πορδὴ ἔχει δύναμιν.

A fart which cannot find an outlet kills many a man; a fart also saves, sending forth its lispings music. Therefore if a fart saves, and on the other hand kills, a fart has the same power as kings.

Like Lucilius (joke 18), Nicarchus wrote in the first century A.D. and greatly influenced Martial. This epigram is 11.395 in the Greek Anthology. Some of his other poems are even cruder. Some readers may wish to see a discreetly subversive political subtext. My translation is borrowed from volume IV of the Loeb translation of the Greek Anthology by W. R. Paton (1929). The subject is named once in each line.

Meter: Elegiac couplet.

21. Strato's Calculation

Πρωκτός καὶ χρυσός τὴν αὐτὴν ψῆφον ἔχουσιν·
ψηφίζων δ' ἀφελῶς τοῦτό ποθ' εὔρον ἐγώ.

'Anus' (πρωκτός) and 'gold' (χρυσός) have the same numerical value: I once discovered this while casually calculating.

The Greek Anthology, in its final form, divides the erotic epigrams, putting the heterosexual poems in Book V, the homosexual in Book XII. Book XII is built on a previous collection, the *Musa Puerilis* of Strato (or Straton) of Sardis, who lived in the time of Hadrian. This is epigram XII, 6.

Since Greek letters were also used as numbers, Greek words had calculable numerical values. Each of the words in this poem adds up to 1570. (Different letters represent 1-9, 10-90, and 100-900. That requires 27 symbols, so the obsolete or non-standard letters *vau*, *koppa*, and *sampi* are added to the usual 24, representing 6, 90, and 900, respectively.)

Leonides of Alexandria and other poets had written whole isopsephic epigrams, in which each couplet (of a quatrain) or each line (of a couplet) has the same total value. Calculating the values of random pairs of words in one's spare time seems an activity more suited to an unusually unimaginative (or perhaps obsessive-compulsive) accountant than an erotic poet.

Meter: Elegiac couplet.

22. A Translatable Pun

Vettius cum monumentum patris exarasset, ait Augustus:
'Hoc est vere monumentum patris colere.'

When Vettius had plowed up his father's tombstone, Augustus said: "This is truly cultivating your father's memory."

This is just one of the many jokes of the emperor Augustus gathered up in Macrobius, *Saturnalia* II, 5. It is unusual that a pun works so well when translated, though not totally surprising, since there is a parallel metaphor at work. Vettius seems to be otherwise unknown. The words translated 'tombstone' and 'memory' are the same in Latin (*monumentum*). So the nouns don't come across as well as the verb (*colere*, 'cultivate').

Source: Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, II, 4, 10.

23. More Martial

Unguentum fuerat, quod onyx modo parva gerebat:
olfecit postquam Papyrus, ecce, garum est.

What the onyx contained had been perfume: after Papyrus
sniffed it, look, it's *garum*.

A joke about bad breath, unless Papyrus' problem is a foul-smelling nose. 'Onyx' here means a small perfume jar or bottle made of onyx. *Garum* was a foul-smelling salty fish sauce or paste used by the Romans to salt their food. Similar liquids are sold in Asian grocery stores today. This epigram shows that the Romans found the smell of *garum* offensive, as we do, though that did not deter them from consuming it.

Source: Martial, *Epigrams*, VII, 94.

24. Diogenes on Athletes

Ἐρωτηθεὶς διὰ τί οἱ ἀθληταὶ ἀναίσθητοὶ εἰσιν, ἔφη, ‘ὅτι κρέασιν ὑείοις καὶ βοείοις ἀνωικοδόμηνται’.

Having been asked why it is that athletes are stupid, he said
“because they are built out of porkchops and beefsteaks”.

Nothing to explain here.

Source: Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, VI, 49.

25. Diogenes on Simple Pleasures

ἐπ' ἀγορᾶς ποτε χειρουργῶν, 'εἶδε', ἔφη, 'καὶ τὴν κοιλίαν ἦν παρατρέψαντα μὴ πεινῆν'.

When behaving indecently in the marketplace, he wished it were as easy to relieve hunger by rubbing an empty stomach.

“Behaving indecently” is of course a euphemism for masturbation: the Greek refers to ‘working with one’s hand’. The Cynics liked to violate conventional moral standards, and sex in public, whether solitary or dual, was one effective method. The marketplace would have provided the largest audience.

Source: Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, VI, 46. Text and translation taken from the Loeb edition of R. D. Hicks (2 volumes, Cambridge, MA, 1929).

26. Philip of Thessalonica on Pedants (I)

Γραμματικοί, Μώμου Στυγίου τέκνα, σῆτες ἀκανθῶν,
 τελχῖνες βίβλων, Ζηνοδότου σκύλακες,
 Καλλιμάχου στρατιῶται, ὃν ὡς ὄπλον ἐκτανύσαντες
 οὐδ' αὐτοῦ κείνου γλῶσσαν ἀποστρέφετε,
 συνδέσμων λυγρῶν θηρήτορες, οἷς τὸ 'μίν' ἢ 'σφίν'
 εὐαδε καὶ ζητεῖν εἰ κύνας εἶχε Κύκλωψ,
 τρίβοισθ' εἰς αἰῶνα κατατρώζοντες ἀλιτροί
 ἄλλων, ἐς δ' ἡμᾶς ἰὸν ἀποσβέσατε.

Grammarians, children of Stygian Momos, thorn-worms,
 book-trolls, puppies of Zenodotos, soldiers of Kallimachos,
 whom you hold in front of you as a shield, though you do not
 turn your tongues away even from him, hunters of grim
 conjunctions, who take delight in *min* and *sphin* and in asking
 whether the Cyclops kept dogs: may you wear yourselves out
 eternally, worthless men chattering abuse of others; but
 against me, quench your venom.

The Garland of Philip is so called because it was compiled by Philip of Thessalonica, around 40 A.D. The epigrams included range in time from 90 B.C. forward, but Philip's own presumably come near the end of the range. This is XI, 321 in the Greek Anthology, Philip LX in *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip*, ed. A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page (Cambridge, 2 volumes, 1968). I have borrowed some phrases from them.

Min and *sphin* are archaic pronouns, long obsolete in Philip's time.

Philip's comments on pedants are no worse than their comments on him. According to Gow and Page (2.328-29), he is "a dull writer", some of his poems "sound hitherto unplumbed depths of fatuity", he is "unimaginative" and "a second-rate dealer in second-hand materials". All true, but his two invectives against the Gows and Pages of his day are not bad. The other one will be tomorrow's text.

27. Philip of Thessalonica on Pedants (II)

Χαίροιθ' οἱ περὶ κόσμον ἀεὶ πεπλανηκότες ὄμμα
οἷ τ' ἀπ' Ἀριστάρχου σῆτες ἀκανθολόγοι·
ποῖ γὰρ ἐμοὶ ζητεῖν τίνας ἔδραμεν ἥλιος οἴμους
καὶ τίνος ἦν Πρωτεύς καὶ τίς ὁ Πυγμαλίων;
γινώσκοιμ' ὅσα λευκὸν ἔχει στίχον· ἢ δὲ μέλαινα
ἱστορίη τήκοι τοὺς Περικαλλιμάχους.

A fond farewell to you whose eyes are always wandering the universe, and to you, thorn-gathering moths from the brood of Aristarchos. For what good is it to me to seek out what tracks Helios ran, and whose son Proteus was, and who Pygmalion was? Let me know the sort of things that have a white line: let the black inquiry melt the über-Kallimakhoi.

This is XI, 347 in the Greek Anthology, Philip LXI in *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip*, ed. A. S. F. Gow and D. L. Page (Cambridge, 2 volumes, 1968). The theme is the same as in Joke 26. I have borrowed some phrases from them.

Gow and Page translate line 5 'I would know works whose lines are crystal-clear', and this must be what a 'white line' implies. The 'black inquiry' sounds like some sort of black magic, which would fit with the melting, since wax dolls were melted in magical rituals. Aristarchos was a Homeric critic.

28. A Joke about the Emperor Domitian

Inter initia principatus cotidie secretum sibi horarum sumere solebat nec quicquam amplius quam muscas captare ac stilo praecacuto configere, ut cuidam interroganti, essetne quis intus cum Caesare, non absurde responsum sit a Vibio Crispo, ne muscam quidem.

At the beginning of his reign he used to spend hours in seclusion every day, doing nothing but catch flies and stab them with a keenly-sharpened stylus. Consequently when someone once asked whether anyone was in there with Caesar, Vibius Crispus made the witty reply: "Not even a fly."

No comment necessary here.

Text and translation are taken from the Loeb edition of Suetonius, Volume II, edited by J. C. Rolfe and revised by Donna W. Hurley (Cambridge, MA, 1997). This is *Lives of the Twelve Caesars, Domitian*, 3.1.

29. A Witticism of the Emperor Augustus

Exceptus est a quodam cena satis parva et quasi cotidiana; nam paene nulli se invitanti negabat. post epulum igitur inops ac sine ullo apparatu discedens vale dicenti hoc tantum insusurravit: ‘non putabam me tibi tam familiarem.’

He was entertained by a certain person with a rather frugal and, so to speak, everyday dinner; for he almost never refused when some someone invited him out. Therefore, as he was leaving after the poor and ill-appointed meal and his host was saying goodbye, he whispered in his ear no more than this: “I didn’t think I was so close a friend of yours.”

Source: Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, II, 4, 13.

Translation adapted from Percival Vaughan Davies, *Macrobius: The Saturnalia*, New York and London, 1969.

30. A Eunuch Joke

Ἀβδηρίτης εὐνοῦχον ἰδὼν γυναικὶ ὁμιλοῦντα ἠρώτα ἄλλον,
εἰ ἄρα γυνὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶ. τοῦ δὲ εἰπόντος εὐνοῦχον γυναῖκα
ἔχειν μὴ δύνασθαι ἔφη· Οὐκοῦν θυγάτηρ αὐτοῦ ἐστίν.

An Abderite, seeing a eunuch conversing with a woman, asked him if she was his wife. When he answered that a eunuch could not have a wife, he replied “Then she must be your daughter.”

The people of Abdera, like those of Kyme (Jokes 9, 11, 13), were proverbially stupid. This joke is Philogelos 115.

Source: *Philogelos : Der Lachfreund*, ed. A. Thierfelder, München, 1968.