

ōtium: Teacher's Notes

1. Martial, The good life, Epigrams V.20

Language and content

Metre: Hendecasyllables

- 1 **Mārtiālis**: this is Iulius Martialis, the poet's closest friend and perhaps patron; he was wealthy and cultivated.
- 2,7,10 **liceat ... nōssēmus ... essent**: the sequence of tenses in the condition is not what one would expect but the sense 'if we were allowed ... we would (not) know ... these would be the places' seems clear.
nōssēmus = nōvissēmus: 'we would have learnt' and so 'we would know', 'we would be familiar with'. The contracted form plus tense shift in English will be difficult for pupils. The negative idea in **nec** could be rendered by 'we would know nothing of'.
- 5 Martial is thinking of clients dancing attendance on patrons, especially at the morning **salūtātiō**.
- 6 The forum was the home of the Basilica Julia, the law-court associated with disputes about inheritances; it was also the setting for funeral speeches as well as financial deals.
- 7 **imāginēs superbās**: the impressive-looking funeral busts of ancestors of the wealthy, kept in the atrium and paraded on the anniversary of the death of the deceased.
- 8 **gestātiō**: this seems to suggest some sort of ride, either on a horse or in a **sella gestātōria**.
- 9 The Aqua Virgo was known for the refreshing coldness of its water.
- 10 The sense requires **(nostra) loca ... (nostrī) labōrēs** 'our haunts ... our interests'.
- 13 **nōbīs pereunt et imputantur**: the image here is of Fate keeping a tally and charging to man's account every day that passes ... and then it is gone (**pereunt**). This may have been seen on sundials.
- 14 **quisquam**: the word, as usual, anticipates a negative response; here the thought is 'No (but we still do not know how to live)'.

Discussion

This is the traditional cry for more time to do the things one wants to do rather than those one has to do. Many of the ideas will be familiar from the *Cambridge Latin Course* but pupils may be interested to hear/read similar thoughts in *Letters* I.9 by Pliny, a contemporary of Juvenal. The tone is established in a monologue-dialogue frame where the poet is not so much addressing his friend but a vision of their friendship and life; the usual images are set side by side and there are few surprises in the lists. The most original ideas come in the twist in lines 11-14: Martial proposes that one should put **bonōs sōlēs** to better use by indulging

oneself.

Martial, *Epigrams* X.47 makes an interesting comparison. It can be found in the *Cambridge Latin Anthology*, p.88.

Pupils might be asked how the two lists differ. If they can offer only 'unpleasant and pleasant activities' they should be prompted to look for more precise contrasts, e.g. public/private, pleasing others/pleasing oneself.

2. Horace, The pleasures of country life, *Epodes* II.1-8,23-8

The passage is an extract from a much longer poem.

Language and content

Metre: Iambic trimeters and dimeters alternating

- 1 **negōtiīs**: the word refers to money-matters which do not concern the farmer; such worries deny a man peace and leisure (*neg-ōtium*) and smack of the city. Business is thus seen as the aberration from the ideal of **ōtium**.
- 3-4 The farmer has inherited his lands and cattle and thus pays no rent; he has no need to borrow money at interest.
- 5-6 The reference is to the days before the professional army when the farmer responded to the war-cry, put down his farming tools, picked up a sword and went to fight as a soldier. Now the farmer is not tempted to brave the sea as a merchant either.
- 5 **mīles**: '(as) a soldier, (he) ...'. Pupils may need help with **mīles** in apposition to the unexpressed pronoun.
- 7-8 The forum is associated with vexatious law-suits; the houses of the powerful imply being obligated to a powerful citizen.
- 10 **tenācī**: the usual gloss is 'firm' although here it implies a deep, lush grass that you can settle into comfortably.
- 11 **altīs ... rīpīs**: in summer, when the water-level is low, the banks look much taller.
- 14 **quod invītet**: 'to invite' (purpose clause, which personifies the water). **quod** refers back to the water's gentle sound.

Discussion

The peace and calm of the countryside are the subject of this passage; pupils may be reminded of the Cambridge Latin Course Unit V, Stage 35. Comparison and further reading could include Tibullus I.1 and Virgil, *Georgics* II.458-540. The list of those pursuits followed and those rejected is standard: they appear in so far as they promote or preclude peace of mind. The commonplaces of this idealised countryside could be used to prompt pupils to suggest modern idealised examples – roses around the country cottage door, etc. Pupils will need to realise that ideas such as those in line 2 depend upon the view that there was once a Golden Age when all was peaceful and well.

3. Catullus, Catullus invites a friend to dinner, *Poems 13*

There is an interesting pair of translations of this poem in *Aestimanda – Practical Criticism of Latin and Greek Poetry and Prose*, p.49-50 (*Balme and Warman, OUP*).

Language and content

Metre: Hendecasyllables

- 2 **sī tibi dī favent:** the sense is quite casual and to be taken with **paucīs diēbus** – ‘if you’re lucky’ or ‘God willing’.
- 5 **sale:** a pun on the two meanings is intended: after **vīnō** we expect **sale** to mean ‘salt’ but by the end of the line the sense of ‘wit’ is appreciated.
- 6 **venuste:** an important word used by Catullus of his friends, it denotes those who have charm and discrimination. The link with Venus will need pointing out; it is significant.
- 8 The poverty of the poet is proverbial.
- 12 **Venerēs Cupīdinēsque:** ‘the gods and goddesses of love’ (*Cambridge Latin Anthology*), ‘all the powers of Charm and Desire there are’ (C.J.Fordyce, *Catullus*, OUP). Pupils could compare these translations and suggest others.

Discussion

Catullus has taken a conventional type of occasional verse – the invitation to a meal – and added some original features of his own, which is where pupils’ interest may usefully be focused. Biographical details of Fabullus will probably only obscure discussion but one may like to ask whether it matters more who the recipient is than the sort of person he is (viz. **venuste**, line 6) and also whether the dinner is ever seriously intended to happen.

It was conventional to be asked to take a gift to a Roman dinner party and lines 1-5 explore this theme: the suspected light humour of line 2 with its original touch of procrastination is confirmed by **sale** and **omnibus cachinnīs** in line 5; Catullus seems too poor to provide anything for the dinner. With **venuste** we sense that the poem turns on the appreciation of those with sensibilities: Fabullus will receive ‘undiluted affection’ and the poet can quote nothing finer than that – or can he? Here comes what R.O.A.M. Lyne calls the ‘calculated humorous surprise’ (*Selections from Catullus Handbook*, CSCP, p.41): a special scent, associated with love and involving Lesbia (**meae puellae**), will be Catullus’ second contribution. The careful word order of line 14 with **nāsum** delayed emphasises its power: it is a gift from the gods and powers of Love to Lesbia, and Fabullus will be given some (evidently the use of perfume generally was common at Roman dinner-parties). Fabullus, as **venustus**, will appreciate that Catullus’ contribution of true friendship and of perfume, an aphrodisiac with all its amusement potential, is not so insignificant after all. Some scholars take the

view that the extravagant promise of **merōs amōrēs** 'the quintessence of love' cannot be adequately fulfilled unless Lesbia herself accompanies the perfume. In her divine fragrance she embodies the perfume.

4. Ovid, A good place to find a girl, *Ars Amatoria* I.89-100)

*Pupils should be told that this is an extract from a much longer work. A little earlier in Book I, Ovid announces that his advice to the lover will be three-fold: finding a girl (our passage is from that section), winning over the girl and making the love last. The *Ars Amatoria* was the *carmen* Ovid refers to when he reflects on the cause of his exile (Tristia II.207): *perdiderint cum mē duo crīmina, carmen et error*.*

Language and content

Metre: Elegiac couplets

- 1 **tū:** much of the work is naturally in the second person.
vēnāre: the imperative form of a deponent verb may well be unfamiliar.
- 2 **vōtō fertiliōra tuō:** ‘even more productive than you could wish for’.
- 3-4 The sense of **quod** + subjunctive is ‘someone for you to ...’. Note the elaborate word-patterning of the chiasmus: a girl you would want to love and keep (**amēs** and **tenēre velīs**) as against a girl you would deceive and give up (**lūdere** and **semel tangās**), where **semel tangās** suggests a one-night stand.
- 5-9 As usual with similes the picking out of the correspondences will be fruitful. The scene suggested is that of women busily filing into the theatre in an unbroken line, perhaps bringing their picnic with them, followed by that of the women inside the theatre as a natural haunt (**saltūsque suōs**) turning their attention from one attraction to another. **cultissima** strongly suggests dressing for the occasion and being on the look-out for a pick-up.
- 5 **redit itque:** ‘goes back and forth’, the sound assisting the idea of repeated action. The reversal of the natural order is for metrical convenience.
- 10 Ovid interjects his own experience, partly to remind us that he is controlling the narrative, partly to keep the light-hearted tone going: Ovid has himself been spoilt for choice.
- 11 An opportunity to introduce pupils to a simple example of chiasmus and to Ovid’s verbal skill generally. They could try to reproduce the chiastic effect in English, either in a translation of this line (‘to watch they come, come to be watched themselves’) or in an example of their own (‘they acquitted Smith but Jones was sent to prison’). A literary example: ‘For we that live to please, must please to live’ (Dr Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*).
spectātum: supine of purpose with **veniunt:** the women come to watch – both the show and the men.
- 12 ‘that place involves the loss of one’s chastity’.

Discussion

If a charge of sexism is levelled at Ovid by pupils, one may like to consider whether, given the conditions and respective positions of men and women, the

ancient world could produce anything else. Could one ever read in Latin a poem by a woman about women going to the theatre to pick up men? Yet no one should suppose it somehow did not happen; the poem itself suggests as much – the simile in lines 7-8, the **cultissima fēmina** of line 9 and the obvious line 11. There is the assumption in Ovid (and perhaps still today?) that both sexes are interested in a pick-up but that the initiative lies with the man. Pupils may enjoy discussing whether modern attitudes are very different and which social occasions Ovid would choose today – it is unlikely that the theatre would be one. The tricky question of the social standing of the women involved in Roman times needs to be considered, too; simple modern analogies can be misleading.

It is an accident of the selection that this particular passage gives few clues about who is chasing whom in the opening lines: is the **tū** male or female? Apart from the English title the sense becomes clear only in lines 9 (**fēmina**) and 11 (**ipsae**). It will be interesting to see if pupils spot this but they should be told that in the wider poem the sense is quite explicit.

5. Ovid, How ordinary people enjoy a festival, *Fasti* III.523-40

Pupils may like to know that this is not an individual poem but a passage from the Fasti, Ovid's account in verse of the religious observances of the Roman calendar; he had reached June when he was banished in AD 8 and the work is unfinished. Although this passage contains many humorous touches, Ovid's purpose in writing the Fasti was a serious one. He was conscious that the observances he was describing were very ancient and provided important evidence for the venerability of Rome and her history.

There is a good deal of unfamiliar vocabulary here; the lines would benefit from preliminary work such as reading out loud and comprehension questions to establish early the images of camping out, drinking and singing and dancing.

Language and content

Metre: Elegiac couplets

- 1 **fēstum geniāle:** the festival was evidently celebrated just out of Rome to the north in an orchard dedicated to Anna Perenna. As her name suggests, she seems to have been associated with the ending of one year and the beginning of the next. March was the first month of the old Roman calendar and a feast was held on the Ides, to mark what was the first full moon of the new year. **geniāle** establishes the happy, sexually active atmosphere of this event.
- 2 **advena:** the Tiber is foreign in the sense that it has flowed through Etruscan regions before reaching Rome; this apostrophe, rather high-flown, is presumably light-hearted.
Thybrī: Greek vocative.
- 3 **plēbs:** the implication is that this is a festival popular especially with the ordinary people of the city who come out to have a good time. At several points in the passage one senses these are young people (lines 4, 9 and 16); the atmosphere is suggestive of bank holidays, rock festivals and the secular aspects of Christmas.
- 4 **accumbit ... suā:** the phrase is suggestive of love-making.
- 6 **quibus:** the so-called dative of agent, popular with Ovid.
- 6-8 **facta ... est, imposuēre:** as a present tense sense is needed, translate, 'some have been known to...'.
statuēre: in a subordinate clause, can bear a past sense.
- 8 Pupils need to realise that togas used a large amount of cloth: the straight edge of this semicircular garment was about 5.5 metres; the width 2.25 metres.
- 9-12 This is clearly some sort of drinking game by numbers perhaps linked with prayers for long life; the introduction of such as Nestor and Sibyl proves just how determined they were to drink themselves silly: cf. **titubant** (line 17). The 'drinking the years' suggests the very nature of

Anna Perenna as a goddess. 70 years would require about 3.5 litres of drink.

- 9 **calent:** suggestive of passion, too.
- 10 **sūmant:** subjunctive in virtual oratio obliqua.
- 12 **Sibylla:** a prophetess, inspired (usually) by Apollo. Of the various Sibyls around the Mediterranean, the Sibyl at Cumae was the best known. When asked by Apollo, who loved her, to choose a gift, she asked to live for as many years as the number of grains of sand she held in her hand, but she forgot to ask for youth. Her aged and decrepit body became legendary.
- 13-15 With all the drinking there should be no surprise at the robust antics here. Ovid piles up the activities with **et cantant ... et iactant ... et dūcunt**. Notice the **dūc-** ... **dū-** ... **c-** ... **c-** ... alliteration in line 15, reinforcing the picture of unsophisticated cavortings.
- 14 Ancient dancing made much use of hands and arms. **manūs** here may be taken to mean 'arms' or 'hands'.
- 15 **positō...crātēre:** this suggests that the bowl is placed on the ground and danced around.
- 16 **amīca:** suggestive of a courtesan entertaining.
- 17 **cum redeunt, titubant:** the dactyls suggest their less than secure progress.
sunt spectācula vulgī: 'they are a public spectacle'.
- 18 **fortūnātōs:** the word is often used in exclamations to describe those particularly well treated by fate or divinity, here Anna Perenna; the crowd may well have shouted out the word – the heavy syllables suggest so.

Discussion

There is no obscure imagery for pupils to grasp and a careful reading will form the basis of a discussion of holidays for religious festivals and celebrations; comparison with those of today is an attractive possibility. Some thought may be given to Ovid's attitude to the jollifications: is he being critical of their coarse enjoyment in lines 13-16? The successive **cantant, iactant, dūcunt**; the contemptuous **quidquid didicēre theātrīs**; the use of **facilēs** with **manūs** and **dūrās** with **chorēās**; and the picture of the hussy all serve to suggest so. Which people would criticise today's secularisation of Christmas celebrations? Can we dictate how people should spend their leisure? How much is leisure bound up with religious festivals in the ancient and modern worlds?

6. Pliny, A day in the life of Pliny the Elder, *Letters* III.5.9-16 (extracts)

These notes owe much to A.N.Sherwin-White, The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commentary (OUP).

Baebius Macer was cōnsul suffectus in AD 103 and was praefectus urbis in AD 117. This is the only letter addressed to him and his relationship with Pliny is unclear.

Language and content

- 1 **Vespasiānum imperātorem:** he reigned from AD 69-79 and so Pliny is writing only of the last ten years of his uncle's life. The pre-dawn visit to the emperor was the **salūtātiō** paid by his **amīcī**, possibly followed by an advisory **cōnsilium**.
- 2-3 **officium ... dēlēgātum:** this was the prefecture of the fleet at Misenum.
- 3 **domum:** although the elder Pliny had a house at Misenum, he appears to have administered the fleet mainly from an office in Rome.
- 4 **cibum:** this would be the **ientāculum**, a light breakfast.
- 5-6 **liber legēbātur:** i.e. by an educated slave. The notes and extracts would be made by another slave.
- 7 **excerperet:** generic subjunctive; such note-taking from the works of other writers was quite normal at this time (cf. Pliny, *Letters* VI.20.5, where the younger Pliny continued to make such extracts during the eruption of Vesuvius).
- 9 **gustābat:** the **gustātiō** or **prandium** was usually taken before bathing, but Pliny was in the habit of bathing first (cf. Pliny, *Letters* VI.16.5).
- 10 **dormiēbat:** the midday siesta was generally taken about the seventh hour.
aliō diē: this is evidence that the standard working day for men of Pliny's class was over by midday. Pliny's 'second day' would have lasted from the seventh or eighth to the ninth hour.
- 14 **solum balineī tempus:** the genitive is adjectival, like a genitive of definition: 'only the time in the baths'.
studiīs: dative of disadvantage: 'from his studies'.
- 15 **interiōribus:** i.e. the place of his actual immersion in the bath.
dēstringitur: this refers to the use of the strigil.
- 17-18 **librō et pugillāribus:** the secretary's task was both to read aloud and to take notes, since there was no room for another slave (see line 6 above).
- 20 **sellā:** this was like a sedan chair and was used by Pliny because wheeled carriages were banned from the streets of Rome for most of the day.
- 21 **poterās:** 'you could have'. Potentiality resides in the verb itself and is therefore regularly expressed by the indicative.

Discussion

This letter gives a brief but graphic description of the elder Pliny's daily routine, which for him was subservient to literary activity, whether reading, note-taking or composing. His works cover a huge range of subjects, all of which are lost except for his main work, the thirty-seven books of the *Naturalis Historia*. Such closely focused energy can be seen also in the younger Pliny, several of whose letters testify to his own pervasive literary interests (e.g. I.6 and I.9); since the elder Pliny took an active interest in the education of his nephew (Pliny, *Letters* VI.16.7), perhaps this is not surprising. The letter also enables us to see beyond the uncle to the daily routine of the upper classes, for whom official work occupied a surprisingly small proportion of their time. Pupils may be able to suggest examples of other groups or individuals whose life is similarly dominated by a single obsession (such as international athletes, superstars in the performing arts). Is such an un-balanced life to be criticised or admired?

7. Pliny, Ummidia Quadrātilla, *Letters* VII.24 (extracts)

This letter is conceptually and linguistically difficult and pupils will need considerable help to understand both the surface meaning and the underlying ideas. Rosianus Geminus was Pliny's consular quaestor in AD 100.

Language and content

- 1 **Ummidia Quadrātilla:** she was born in about AD 26, giving a probable date for this letter of about AD 104-5.
- 1-2 **paulō minus octōgēsimō ... annō:** she was probably about seventy-eight.
- 3-4 **ultrā matrōnālem modum:** i.e. in view of the hazards of childbirth.
- 5 **testāmentum ... optimum:** it was excellent because she left the bulk of her property to her grandchildren and gave virtually nothing to the sycophantic individuals mentioned in lines 27ff.
hērēdēs: 'as her heirs'.
- 5-6 **ex besse, ex tertiā parte:** the meaning of these legal terms is clear enough: the grandson would receive two-thirds of the estate and the granddaughter one-third.
- 6 **neptem vix nōvī:** this suggests that Pliny was not a close family friend.
- 7 **nepōtem:** this is the young Ummidius Quadratus, whose honesty and eloquence Pliny praises in *Letters* VI.11. Little is known of him except that he enjoyed political success under Hadrian.
- 8-9 **etiam eī quōs ... amant:** the meaning of this difficult clause is, 'even those to whom he is not related love him as if he were'.
- 11 **intrā quārtum et vīcēsimum annum:** such an early marriage was not unusual for men of his class. Had he still been unmarried at 25 he would have been precluded by the **lēx Iūlia** from inheriting a legacy.
- 13 **dēlicātam sevērissimē:** note the antithesis. Pliny is trying to show the contrast not only between the characters of Ummidia and Quadratus, but also between Ummidia's personal tastes and her sense of responsibility towards her grandson.
- 14 **pantomīmōs:** the pantomimus was an actor who combined the roles of tragic actor, opera singer and ballet dancer and who would be accompanied by musicians and chorus; here the plural refers to the whole troupe. Although Tiberius had passed a law restraining senators and equites from associating openly with such actors and public performances by them had been banned by Domitian and Trajan, it seems these laws quickly lapsed. Ummidia's possession of a private troupe of actors is criticised by Pliny (a) explicitly, on the grounds that she wasted too much money on them; (b) implicitly, perhaps, on the grounds that pantomime actors were disreputable and even immoral (both in their performances and in their private lives).
- 17 **studia:** Pliny was entrusted with Quadratus' entry into the legal

- profession.
- 18 **in illō ōtiō sexūs:** women of high birth and wealth had little to occupy them, because they were denied a public career and the abundance of slaves left them with few domestic responsibilities.
lūsū calculōrum: gambling in public was proscribed by law.
- 21 **reverentiā:** perhaps Ummidia was sensitive to the law; Pliny, however, is again praising her sense of responsibility to her grandson. There is also a paradox: **reverentia** is usually an attitude adopted by young people towards the old; here the old lady shows **reverentia** to her young grandson.
- 23-4 **sacerdōtālībus lūdīs:** although **lūdī** more often meant chariot races or gladiatorial contests, it is clear from the context that Pliny is here referring to drama competitions.
- 26 **hodiē primum:** these two words should be taken together.
- 27 **aliēnissimī hominēs:** note the contrast achieved by placing these words next to **nepōs**. Pliny does not make it clear whether these were applauders actually hired for the purpose by Ummidia (cf. Pliny, *Letters* II.14, where he calls them **laudicēnī**) or whether they were **clientēs** or just freelance. If they were **clientēs** or **libertī** of Ummidia, Pliny's **aliēnissimī** would be rhetorical exaggeration.
- 28 **puget mē dixisse honōrem:** Pliny rightly observes that fawning attention is not indicative of respect.
- 30 **singulōs gestūs ... reddēbant:** i.e. whenever Ummidia applauded or gesticulated, so did her fan-club.
cum canticīs: perhaps they joined in the singing which accompanied the dances.
- 31 **minima lēgāta:** perhaps the main motivation for these applauders was the expectation of a bequest (cf. Regulus in Pliny, *Letters* II.20; it can be found in the *Cambridge Latin Anthology*, p.154). Ummidia's minimal acknowledgement of them in her will shows that she was impervious to their attentions. There is a degree of irony in the last sentence because their hopes of success, already only modest, were further reduced by Ummidia's discouragement of Quadratus from associating with her indulgences.

Discussion

Pliny's praise of Ummidia is balanced by criticism of her extravagant tastes, partly expressed through his admiration for the successful avoidance of exposure to these excesses by Quadratus. The qualities in Ummidia that Pliny finds praiseworthy are her common-sense and her proper sense of responsibility for the upbringing of Quadratus, whose self-control, modesty and obedience he equally admires.

Pupils may initially see Ummidia as a hypocritical killjoy, telling her grandson (a man in his twenties), 'Do as I say, not as I do'. How would he have felt as an adolescent, being forever sent out of the room when entertainment appeared? Sherwin-White, however, points out that Ummidia herself had been young in the reign of Nero, when frivolity, gambling and theatre-going took precedence over serious pursuits for some aristocrats, but that times had changed by Pliny's day: society had become stricter, and law and government demanded more commitment. Ummidia, therefore, may have felt that if Quadratus wanted a public career, his style of life would have to be very different from her own. Pupils may like to consider whether society today is in a similar periodic swing between licence and puritanism. They could also discuss their reactions to the attitudes of Ummidia, Quadratus and Pliny.