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Martial's *disiecta membra* and the text of *Epigrams*, 2.73

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Of the 1559 extant poems which constitute Martial's epigrammatic corpus¹, three pieces have survived as monostichs: two are hexameters (2.73 and 7.98)², and one a scazon (8.19)³. And it is with the first of these metrical oddities (2.73) that I shall be concerned in this note⁴.

I begin by reproducing in toto the text, apparatus and accompanying brief notes from Friedlaender's epoch-making edition of 1886⁵:

LXXIII

†*Quid faciat vult scire Lyris: quod sobria: fellat.*

LXXIII. "quod (sobria) *XABF* quod *Q* quid *PEw* quid? sobria fellat *Scr.* Quid faciat, vis scire, *Lyris*, quom est sobria? fellat *Baehrens*. Quid faciat, vult scire *Lyris*? quin sobria fellat *Grasberger*. [Quid faciat, se scire, *Lyris* negat ebria semper.] Quid faciat vult scire *Lyris*? quod sobria: fellat *Munro*. In *O* folgt: *Gaudeo*: quid faciet (facies *Bodleianus*) ebria facta *Lyris*."

LXXIII. "Vermuthlich ist dieser unverständliche Vers ein Fragment (vgl. die Ergänzung von *Munro* in den kritischen Anm.). Die beiden andern rein hexametrischen Gedichte, die bei *M* vorkommen I 53 VI 64, bestehen aus mehreren Versen."

My reason for re-presenting, in full, the combined findings and observations of scholars, which were first published over a century ago, is two-fold: in the first place, the apparatus gives possibly the fullest conspectus of readings and conjectures available in one place, and in the second, despite its age and brevity, the whole treatment still provides the most informative general survey of the fragment, in the absence of any modern full-length critical assessment⁶,

1 1561 if we include the two pieces appended to the prose prefaces of Books 1 and 9. This total represents the reckoning of pieces according to the numbering and division of the most recent critical text (see below, n. 7).

2 7.98: *Omnia, Castor, emis: sic fiet ut omnia vendas*. This epigram, incidentally, is mis-cited in Friedlaender's edition in one of the introductory chapters (Martials Versbau, 27; see below on n. 5), and given as VII 93. J. P. Sullivan reproduces this blunder in his recent monograph, *Martial: The Unexpected Classic – A Literary and Historical Study* (Cambridge 1991) 227, n. 22; in the same paragraph also 11.59 is erroneously given as 11.49.

3 8.19: *Pauper videri Cinna vult: et est pauper*. For an explanation of this line see the footnote in the 'new' Loeb translation (see below, n. 8).

4 For further information on Martial's metrics, recourse may be fruitfully had to E. Siedschlag, *Zur Form von Martials Epigrammen* (Berlin 1977) 127–133, especially 131 n. 13 for the question of *monosticha* in Martial and other ancient writers, both Greek and Roman.

5 *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton Libri mit erklärenden Anmerkungen von L. Friedlaender* (Leipzig 1886, repr. Amsterdam 1967) vol. 1, 273.

6 Friedlaender's apparatus may be supplemented by that of the Heraeus/Borovskij Teubner edition (Leipzig 1976). As far as more modern work is concerned, a brief contribution has

and has remained the initial source of information for subsequent editors and commentators.

The most recent critical edition of the complete *Epigrams* is D. R. Shackleton Bailey's 'new' Teubner text⁷ which, as with that same scholar's 'new' Loeb translation⁸, offers a deobelized text ad loc. consisting of the surviving line, preceded by Munro's suggested preparatory line in parentheses, against which restoration Housman set his seal of approval⁹. Perhaps one may think, therefore, that all has now been said and done concerning this so-called fragment, since a single line of verse cannot, in its isolation, hope to yield much information about its contextual origin, or offer many clues as to the literary atmosphere of its background. All this seems lost forever. But there does still remain the possibility of improving the text slightly, without causing damage either to the sense or to the satirical impact of the line.

I suggest that *vult* be emended to *vis* (proposed also by Baehrens, but in the context of a different understanding of the line), with the line punctuated as follows:

*quid faciat, vis scire, Lyris? quod sobria: sellat*¹⁰.

been made in recent years to the bibliography of 2.73 by M. Zicàri, "Note a Petronio e a Marziale", in: *Lanx Satura Nicola Terzaghi Oblata. Miscellanea Philologica* (Genova 1963) 343–354; at 348–350, Zicàri proposes to emend and punctuate the text as follows: *Quid faciat uolt scire Lyris. Quod sobria: sellat*. He further feels that: "Sulle sue labbra di meretrice facere ha un suono ambiguo", 350, and suggests that *sellare* here at least hints at its original – though uncommonly attested – meaning, 'to suck (milk); to suck the milk of' (OLD s.v., 684; and see J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, London 1982, 130ff.): "A mio vedere quindi il lettore antico trasentiva in *sellat* il significatio originario." This theory attempts to link *sellat* with the *sobria*/*[ebria]* drinking-theme. As a counter-balance for his suggestion of the subjunctive *sellat*, Zicàri takes *quid faciat* as deliberative subjunctive, commenting: "è singolare che nessuno sia venuto in mente che *quid faciat* può anche significare, e qui deve significare, 'che cosa fare'" (350).

7 Stuttgart 1990.

8 London/Cambridge, Mass. 1993, in three volumes, to replace W. C. A. Ker's original two-volume Loeb edition of 1919–1920.

9 In his review of W. Heraeus' Teubner edition (Leipzig 1925), which appeared in *ClRev* 39 (1925) 199–203, at 201 (= *Classical Papers*, 1099–1104, at 1102), Housman writes: "Some things I miss: [...] Munro's perfect completion of II 73."

10 On consulting some of the older editions of the *Epigrams* I find that my proposed correction *vis* for *vult* is not new, but that my arguments offered in support of it are. I have checked the following editions: Ferrara (1471); Calderinus (1474); Aldine (1501); Rader (1602); Prado (1607); Farnaby (1615); Schrijver (1619); Collesson ('Delphin' 1680); Schneidewin (1842); Gilbert (1886); and many of the 'standard' complete editions from Friedlaender to Shackleton Bailey, but the reading goes unrecorded and neglected. Of the older editions Collesson, in a separate appendix entitled *Epigrammata Obscaena*, after giving the text with *vult*, remarks: "alii: *Quid faciat, vis scire Lyris? quid?* etc.". Similarly Farnaby has: "alii leg.: *Quid faciat vis scire Lyris quoque sobria? sel.*" and Prado: "A cutissima Lyris fellatricis, & eiusdem ebriae reprehensio, facta interrogatione & responsione concepta. Est autem versus subobscurus.

Admittedly, there seems very little, at first sight, to commend one reading over the other; at least as far as the *sense* is concerned, since either could be construed to yield a legitimate or satisfactory meaning. So much, then, for emendation according to *sense*. Consideration of *usage*, however, is a different matter altogether in this particular instance. For we find that the notion of 'wanting' occurs on numerous occasions throughout Martial, used as an epigrammatic device, as it were, and especially in the form: 'do you want [me] to ...?' e.g. 2.7.8; 2.16.6; 2.39.2; 2.53.1; 2.72.7; 3.44.17; 3.78.2; 4.26.2; 4.56.2; 4.67.8; 4.74.4; 6.11.8; 6.30.6; 6.50.5; 10.14.10; 11.56.2; 12.17.10; 12.22.2; 12.36.11. Moreover, we come across the notion 'want to know' expressed as a 2nd person interrogative form, in the following epigrams:

3.20.21 'vis scire quid agat Canius tuus? ridet.'

3.44.4 *quid sit, scire cupis?*

10.68.9 *scire cupis quo casta modo matrona loquaris?*

11.8.13–14 *scire cupis nomen? si propter basia, dicam.*
iurasti. nimium scire, Sabine, cupis.

These five instances, added to the newly emended 2.73, provide us with six occasions on which the infinitive *scire* is coupled with the verb 'to want/wish' (either *vis* or *cupis*). *Scire*, in its infinitival form, occurs only eleven times in the whole Martial, thus our six examples account for over 50% of its presence in the corpus¹¹.

Whatever the true nature and status of 2.73, whether a fragment, or whether an experiment in form as the ultimate in epigrammatic concision – and we shall probably never know – we can, I think, be sure that *vis* is the more likely contender for permanent residence in the line.

Fugit enim tanta subtilitas oculorum aciem. Argutissimam sententiam eius, 'quod sobria', sic concipe: vis scire quid faciat Lyris? fellat quod et facit sobria. Ergo perpetua fellatrix est, etc." In the apparatus criticus of his 1842 edition Schneidewin records *vis* as a variant for *vult* in G (= Gudianus Guelferbytanus, 157, saec. XII), and the reading is found also in the 'Didot' edition of 1825. I am grateful to the editor and anonymous referees for kindly drawing my attention to this last point.

11 I think it is a flaw in Zicări's argument that, as a reason for dismissing the possibility of an interrogative punctuation of the line, he draws attention to the fact that the only other two examples of *monosticha* in Martial, viz. 7.98 and 8.19, are phrased in an objective rather than an interrogative tone. But this fails to take into account my own observations on Martial's usage in the quasi-formulaic interrogative device *vis/cupis scire?*