

Postgraduate assignment feedback form
(to be completed by marker)

<i>Student Name: NN</i>	
<i>Module title: Advanced Latin Poetry</i>	<i>Student number:</i> <i>NN</i>
<i>For completion by marker:</i>	
<i>Comments:</i>	
This is an excellent commentary on Mart. 9.18. It discusses the text in detail and with sensitivity to register and allusion, while also contextualising the epigram both in terms of literary tradition and historical situation. The essay is clearly structured around the epigram and reads easily. The reader is helped along throughout and the reasoning is explained carefully step by step. In terms of reading, there is also excellent coverage both of primary sources and of scholarship. You have looked carefully at parallel texts, including both Flavian authors and earlier literary tradition. (The only allusion that you do not discuss in full is the reference to Castalia, and its intertexts.) You have also covered a very good range of scholarship and interact with scholarly opinion with confidence, measuring it against your own appreciation of the text. This is excellent practise. References and bibliography are clear and helpful throughout – on the whole, the essay is presented in an impeccable fashion. Keep up the good work – I really enjoyed reading this!	
<i>Marker's signature: MO</i>	<i>Date: 01.12.11</i>
<i>Provisional mark: 80</i> NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the final examination board.	

Assignment 1. Word count: 1551

Commentary on Martial 9.18 (Watson and Watson no. 11)

This poem is a request, in a rather elevated tone, to Domitian to grant Martial a private water supply for his *domus* in Rome on the Quirinal Hill. There has been some debate as to how common it was to have a private water supply in Rome at the time. Evidence quoted by Watson and Watson (2003:112) suggests that it was a privilege granted only to senatorial and some equestrian households, in which case Martial's request was clearly necessary and perhaps quite **bold**. Frontinus (*De Aquis* 3) states that private supplies came 'beneficio principis' so Martial is also asking the right person: specifically he wanted a supply from the Aqua Marcia, which as he says (in line 6) was so near his house that he could hear **it**. This water was considered the best: Frontinus, *De Aquis* 13, implies this when he says of the Aqua Claudia: 'Haec bonitatis proximae est Marciae.' In chapter 92 Frontinus describes how Domitian's successor Nerva went so far as to reserve the Marcia for drinking water only. What Martial intended to use the water for is unclear: he just tells us that his town house, rather strikingly personified in line 5, is thirsty. This could be a metonym for the people in the house or a reference to the gardens and water features one might expect an urban *domus* to contain; certainly the evidence from Pompeii suggests that much of the private supply was for this sort of use rather than for drinking, washing or bathing (Beard 2008:93).

The other feature here is a contrast between urban and rural life. Lines 1-4 describe how Martial's country farm at Nomentum does have water, ending with the word *aquas* (line 4); lines 5-8, opening with a strong antithesis (*sicca*), show how his town house does not (although he confidently ends with *imber erit* to show his trust in Domitian's largesse on this **matter**). As far as the first two words of line 2 the poem could be simply about his farm, in the tradition of Catullus and Horace. By describing it as *rus minimum* he seems to be writing deliberately in the tradition of these two writers in underplaying the size and wealth of his property. Catullus (44) describes his

Comment [MO1]: Good use of background material here.

Comment [MO2]: Good connection to 9.18, and good use of parallel source.

Comment [MO3]: Indeed.

farm as *Sabine seu Tiburs*, going on to say that kind people describe it as in Tibur rather than (less fashionably) in the Sabine country; Horace (*Carm.* 2.16.37, quoted Watson and Watson 2003:113) describes his Sabine farm as *parua rura*, exactly Martial's own phrase in 12.57.1. Saller (1983:247) shows how inconsistent Martial can be in describing the wealth (or poverty) of his estate by contrasting his description of it in 7.31 (unproductive) with that in 10.48 (where it supplies a fairly generous dinner **party**). Here it does have water but only drawn de ualle brevi, raised laboriously by a water-wheel (lines 3-4) - although, as Watson and Watson (2003:114) point out, water-wheels were themselves expensive and if antlia is such a wheel, it again gives the lie to the idea that Martial's farm was minimum, however short the valley. The fact is surely that Martial describes his country house (as he does his town one) in terms which suit the function they perform in each epigram. As such inconsistencies like these are bound to **appear**.

Comment [M04]: Excellent.

Comment [M05]: How do they reflect on the narrator, though? This might be worth some thought as well.

He suggests that his town house is also small (*parui . . . lares*) although he uses the ordinary adjective, at least, rather than the superlative *minimum*. Watson and Watson compare 9.97.8 (*parua . . . domus*). Frier (1977:27) suggests that in fact an owner of a single household would be one of a 'privileged few,' so perhaps we should not take Martial's protestations of humble life too seriously. He had owned a *cenaculum*, a rented apartment, before, although to judge by Frier's study of apartments in Ostia (1977) this itself need not have been particularly spartan. In 1.108.1-2 we see him still in a *cenaculum* addressing his patron Gallus, and in terms which he now revises to reflect his changed circumstances:

Est tibi — sitque precor multos crescatque per annos —

pulchra quidem, uerum Transtiberina domus.

We may note the fact that *domus* has changed into the more poetic **lares**, setting an elevated tone which Martial - not without some humour - returns to throughout the poem. Another reason for the elevated tone, of course, is the fact that the patron in this poem is the emperor himself, and the end of line 1 repeats a common wish that the ruler may have a long life. The juxtaposition of *minimum* and *parui* in line 2 emphasises Martial's subservience in the presence of Domitian (whether or not

Comment [M06]: Yes, while of course also connecting to the notion of humble Roman origins.

he exaggerates the humbleness of his dwellings). As *rus minimum* is taken up by *in urbi lares* so *sitientibus hortis* (in the country) in line 3 is echoed by *sicca domus* (in the city) in line 5. Between these two 'dry' words, however, comes the crucial word *aquas*. These waters may be *laboratas* (and the three long syllables which end the word demonstrate the slowness of the wheel or other lifting device in raising the water) but they nevertheless begin a kind of chain reaction which does not stop until the last words of the poem. The last five lines all have some word for 'water' in them: *aquas* - *rore* - *fonte* - *undam* - *imber*. At least two are highly poetic and maintain the elevated tone. It is as if the water, once started, cascades from one line to another - perhaps a demonstration for Domitian of the effects on Martial's *domus* of clear water from the Aqua Marcia. The sequence of synonyms for water is not unlike Ovid's description of the metamorphosis of Arethusa in *Met.* 5.633-638; here the words also include *ros*, *aquas* and *undas*. If there is an echo here it might suggest the sort of miraculous transformation a water supply could effect.

Comment [M07]: Give parallel examples to show evidence of the elevated tone – where are these words otherwise used?

Comment [M08]: Nice!

At the moment, however, the *domus* complains (*queritur*), in a rather humorous personification, that it is dry; the word *foueri* is common in Virgil among others (*fouet* is for example used at *Aen.* 1.718 when Dido has Ascanius in her lap) but applied to a medium-sized building seems rather incongruous. The deponent *queritur* has an active meaning, but *foueri*, a real passive, has 'by no water' as its instrument - as if the house has taken the initiative in complaining but has had no response as yet, further emphasised by two spondees in the fourth and fifth feet. In line 6 Martial then describes how he can hear the water (but can't enjoy it), emphasising the point audibly with both assonance and alliteration (*fonte sonet*).

Comment [M09]: Good work here.

The final couplet of the poem brings Domitian to the centre stage again, or perhaps introduces him as a *deus ex machina*. *Caesar* of line 1 (as Watson and Watson (2003: 113) point out, Martial's usual way of addressing him) now moves through *Auguste* to a direct comparison with Jupiter himself (*Iovis imber*). Martial himself has moved from singular to plural (*nostris* . . . *penatibus*),

with the *penates* complementing the *lares* of line 2. Line 8 is reminiscent of *Silvae* 1.27, in which Statius (perhaps not too seriously) declares that Jupiter can send storms to threaten the fields as long as Domitian, 'our Jupiter' continues to rain down sweetmeats at Saturnalia (*dum nostri Iovis hi ferantur imbres*). This is one of a number of comparisons between Domitian and Jupiter Scott (1933:248) identifies in Statius; assuming we take Citroni's date of autumn 94 for Martial's Book 9 (1989:222-23) and a date of 93 for Books 1-3 of *Silvae* (Newlands 2011:3) the similarity may be no coincidence. It was clearly a comparison (either direct or implied) which both poets used (see for example Martial 8.39, 9.20) and was designed to please an emperor who restored the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol (Suetonius, *Dom.* 5, referred to by Watson and Watson (2003:118)). This is linked with the water image which (metaphorically) flows through much of the poem, implying with 'Castalis' that Domitian's grant will result in much more poetry - including, presumably, panegyrics - from the freshly-inspired Martial. Lorenz (2004) identifies water as a unifying feature in Book 4; here the next poem in book 9 is also about water, a short witty epigram suggesting that a rival poet's huge panegyric about his patron's bathhouse is really a very long request to be invited to dinner. The irony of this immediately following a poem in which Martial himself is fulsome in praise of Domitian in the hope of a favour cannot, surely, have been lost on him or his audience. The next poem (9.20) is a real panegyric piece strongly linking Domitian and Jupiter. It might be tempting to see 9.19 as in some way subverting, albeit subtly, the panegyric of 9.20 and Martial's request for water, with its attendant figure of Domitian as god, in 9.18; but Watson and Watson (2003:10) are surely right to reject Garthwaite's suggestion that Martial subtly criticises Domitian in subtexts which Domitian, who was clearly no fool, was unable to appreciate. Better perhaps to see it as one of the typical juxtapositions of opposites which Fitzgerald (describes (2007, ch. 4, and especially pp.131-133, using 9.24 and 9.25) and which he sees as a common current in Martial's work.

Comment [MO10]: Good.

Comment [MO11]: Excellent. Could you give parallels of your own as well as the ones cited by Garthwaite?

Bibliography

- Beard, M. *Pompeii: The Life of a Roman Town*. London: Profile Books, 2008.
- Citroni, M. 'Marziale e la Letteratura per i Saturnali', *Illinois Classical Studies*, 14, (1989), pp. 201-226.
- Fitzgerald, W. *Martial: The World of the Epigram*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Frier, B.W. 'The Rental Market in Early Imperial Rome', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 67, 1977, pp. 27-37.
- Lorenz, S. 'Waterscape with Black and White: Epigrams, Cycles, and Webs in Martial's "Epigrammaton Liber Quartus"'. *American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 125, No. 2, Summer, 2004, pp. 255-278.
- Newlands, C. *Statius' Silvae' Book 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Saller, R.P. 'Martial on Patronage and Literature', *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 33, No.1, 1983, pp. 246-257.
- Scott, K. 'Statius' Adulation of Domitian', *American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 1933, pp. 247-259.
- Watson, L. and Watson, P. *Martial: Selected Epigrams*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.