

MORE EPIGRAMS FROM MARTIAL

*(Marcus Valerius Martialis, Roman poet born in Spain, A.D. 43? - 104?)*

Charidemus has known for months  
that his wife and his doctor are lovers.  
Why does he suffer it supinely?  
That he might not die untimely.

Vacerra says his taste is classical:  
To him a good poet is a dead poet.  
My apologies, Vacerra, for breathing.  
It's not worth dying just to please you.

"I never dine alone," says Philo,  
and what he says is true.  
When not invited out, he goes  
to bed without a chew.

You wonder, Pannychus, why your Celia  
shuns you for the company of eunuchs?  
That's easy. She wants a little fun  
without having to make little tunics.

Always taking up something new,  
Sertorius finishes nothing.  
Whoever goes to bed with Sertorius  
is in for a big letdown.

Wretched poems from various hands  
Paulus recites as his alone.  
I see nothing very wrong in that:  
What you buy you may *call* your own.

That pooch of yours licking your face and lips  
with avidity causes me no wonder, Manneia.  
Some dogs are known to tongue dung.

Until recently a physician,  
Diaulus is now a mortician.  
It wasn't a great transition.

Immodesty and sex bother  
you so much, Safronius,  
that I wonder how on earth  
you ever became a father.

Philinus, who never screws, is now  
a father. That fits with what lights?  
Maybe Gaditanus knows:  
He's a writer who never writes.

With six rings jostling on each of his fingers  
Charinus eats, bathes, makes love, sleeps,  
and wipes his crack after a bowel movement.  
Renters of rings do not buy ring boxes.

I'm inclined to believe Segius,  
ex-priest and religion ditcher,  
when he lecturing screams,  
"There *are* no gods!"  
he blasphemes every day  
and every day gets richer.

Paula wants to marry Priscus. I think she's wise.  
Priscus evades marrying Paula. I think he's wise.

The poet Varus assiduously pens  
two hundred lines a day, yet oddly  
neither publishes nor recites his works.  
No sage he, but Varus is wise.

Bassus craps into a gold slop jar,  
drinks from a cheap glass cup.  
It would seem he values less  
what goes into his long canal  
than what comes out the lower end.

Infinitely resourceful, Labulla has found  
a way to kiss her lover in front of her husband.  
The family dwarf (a cretin) she busses repeatedly.  
This moist pet fool the lover then snatches up,  
fills to overflowing with his own kisses,  
and delivers back to the smiling lady.  
A far bigger fool than the dwarf: the husband!

Your “nephews,” Paulus,  
just like your paintings and bric-a-brac,  
are genuinely antique.

They are mistaken, Zoilus,  
who call you depraved.  
You are depravity itself.

Whenever we see Bassa, she sits  
holding beside her some wordless child,  
whom she fondles and calls pet names.  
Yet Bassa cares little for children.  
Why, then, does she borrow them constantly?  
Bassa has a problem with gas.

A fortuneteller told Munna  
he would come to an early end.  
Horrified, and disinclined  
to leave any funds behind,  
Munna spent the two million  
of his patrimony like water.  
In less than a year it was gone.  
She may or may not have been clairvoyant,  
but I think the fortuneteller was right.  
And that, Munna, is what counts.

THE INN

*Taira no Tadanori, Japanese, 1096-1153*

It is almost dark.  
I approach an old inn,  
Where I shall have a bower  
Under a cherry tree.  
My host will be  
A flower.

TO A DILATORY PATRON

*Jl al-Din al-Rumi, Persian, 1207-1273*

Sire, I need now  
That winter cloak  
You have promised me time and again.  
I beg to point out, Sire,  
That it was a cloak I asked for,  
Not a shroud.