

*At Dinner with Domitian*  
CAMWS 2015  
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**1. Statius *Silvae* 1.6**

Dum refero diem beatum laeti Caesaris ebriamque aparchen. Vix Aurora novos movebat ortus, iam bellaria linea pluebant	(10)	While of happy Caesar's joyous Day I tell, and of tipsy feasting. Scare had Aurora brought the dawn, And already good things rained down:
hunc rorem veniens profudit eurus: quicquid nobile Ponticis nucetis, fecundis cadit aut iugis Idymes; quod ramis pia germinat Damascos, et quod percoquit ebriosa Caunos,	(15)	These dewes the easterly sprinkled: Whichever are best of Pontic nuts, And dates from Idume's fertile hills, And plums pious Damascus grows, And figs Ebusos and Caunos ripen, Freely the lavish spoils descend.
largis gratuitum cadit rapinis: molles gaioli lucuntulique, et massis Amerina non perustis et mustaceus et latente palma praegnates caryotides cadebant,	(20)	And pastries and small cakes Ameria's un-ripened apples and pears, Spiced cakes and ripened dates, Shower from an unseen palm. Not stormy Hyas drenches Earth Nor the Pleiades with such showers
non tantis Hyas inserena nimbis terras obruit aut soluta Plias, qualis per cuneos hiems Latinos plebem grandine contudit serena. ducat nubila Iuppiter per orbem	(25)	As bruised the Latian theatre Like bursts of hail from a clear sky. Let Jupiter cloud the whole world Threaten to deluge the open fields, So long as our Jove brings such rain.
et latis pluvias minetur agris, dum nostri Iovis hi ferantur imbres. ...		...
et tu quin etiam—quis hoc vacare, uis promittere possit hoc deorum?— nobiscum socias dapes inisti. iam se, quisquis is est, inops, beatus, convivam ducis esse gloriatur.	(50)	Why you yourself (which of the gods Issues and accepts his own invitation?) Have come to the feast along with us. Now all, now whoever, rich or poor Can boast of dining with our leader. (Based on trans. A. S. Kline)

**2. Statius *Silvae* 4.2**

nunc primum dominoque dedit consurgere mensa, qua celebrem mea vota lyra. quas solvere grates sufficiam?	(6)	
...		
cerno iacens? datur haec iuxta, datur ora tueri vina inter mensaeque et non adsurgere fas est? Tectum augustum, ingens, non centum insigne columnis, sed quantae superos caelumque Atlante remisso sustentare queant. stupet hoc vicina Tonantis	(20)	
regia, teque pari laetantur sede locatum numina, nee magnum properes escendere caelum ...		
implet et ingenti genio iuvat, aemulus illic mons Libys Iliacusque nitens et multa Syene et Chios et glaucae certantia Doridi saxa Lunaque portandis tantum suffecta columnis. longa supra species: fessis vix culmina prenda visibus auratique putes laquearia caeli.	(30)	

hic eum Romuleos proceres trabeataque Caesar  
agmina mille simul iussit discumbere mensis,  
ipsa sinus accincta Ceres Bacchusque laborat

But how shall I acknowledge my prayers granted, what  
Thanks suffice, now that Caesar brings me this new joy,  
A place at his sacred banquet, a seat at his imperial feast?

...

Is it you I gaze at, as I sit here, sovereign of all the lands,  
Great father of a world conquered, dear to the gods, hope  
Of all mankind? Is it given to me, indeed, to look on your  
Face nearby at wine and board, allowed to remain seated?  
Here is the august building, immense, magnificent, and not  
With a mere hundred columns but enough to support high  
Heaven and the gods above, were Atlas to ease his burden.  
The Thunderer's neighboring temple views it in wonder,  
The gods rejoice to see you installed in a palace equaling  
Their own (hasten not to ascend to the heights of the sky);

...

You fill the house and weight it with your great genius.  
Here in contention find stone from Libyan heights,  
And the bright stone of Troy, block from Syene,  
Chios too, rocks to rival the color of the grey-green sea,  
Marble from Carystos, and Luna to support the columns.  
Its height challenges vision; your weary eyes can scare  
Find the roof, and you'd think its heaven's gilded ceiling,  
When Caesar asks the great men of Rome and the ranks  
Of robed knights all to recline here at a thousand tables,  
Cere herself with tucked-up robe, and Bacchus labor to supply.  
(Trans. A. S. Kline)

### 3. *Martial Epigram 8.39*

Qui Palatinae caperet convivia mensae  
Ambrosiasque dapes, non erat ante locus:  
Hic haurire decet sacrum, Germanice, nectar  
Et Ganymedea pocula mixta manu.  
Esse velis, oro, serus conviva Tonantis: (5)  
At tu si properas, Iuppiter, ipse veni.

Formerly there was no place large enough for the banquets  
and ambrosial repasts of the Palatine board. Here,  
Germanicus, you may fitly drink sacred nectar and cups  
mixed by the hand of Ganymede. I pray it may be long  
before you chose to dine with the Thunderer. As for you  
Jupiter, if you cannot wait, come yourself.  
(Trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey)

### 4. *Martial Epigram 13.91*

Ad Palatinas acipensem mittite mensas:  
Ambrosias ornent munera rara dapes.

Send the sturgeon to the Palatine table; such  
rarities should adorn divine feasts  
(Trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey)

### 5. *Martial Epigram 8.50*

Grandia pollicitus quanto maiora dedisti!  
Promissa est nobis sportula, recta data est. (10)

Large as were your promises, how much grander  
your gifts! We were promised a dole, we have  
been given a formal dinner.  
(Trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey)

## 6. Suetonius *Domitian* 7.1

Sportulas publicas sustulit revocata rectorum cenarum consuetudine.

He did away with the public sportula and revived that of formal dinners. (Trans. J. C. Rolfe)

## 7. Pliny the Younger *Panegyricus* 49.6-7

Non enim ante medium diem distentus solitaria cena, spectator adnotatorque convivis tuis immines, nec ieiunis et inanibus plenus ipse <et> eructans non tam adponis quam obicis cibos quos dedigneris attingere, aegreque perpersus superbam illam convictus simulationem, rursus te ad clandestinam ganeam occultumque luxum refers.

You do not arrive already gorged with a solitary feast before midday, to sit menacingly over your guests, watching and marking all they do, nor when they are fasting and hungry do you belch from a full stomach and present or rather throw at the food you disdain to touch, and after a pretense at enduring this insulting mockery of a banquet take yourself back to secret gluttony and private excess. (Trans. B. Radice)

## 8. Suetonius *Domitian* 21

Ac lavabat de die prandebatque ad satietatem, ut non temere super cenam praeter Matianum malum et modicam im ampulla potiunculam sumeret.

He bathed and lunched to satiety before the end of the forenoon, so that at dinner he rarely took anything except a Matian apple and a moderate amount of wine from a jug. (Trans. J. C. Rolfe)

## 9. Dio Cassius *Roman History* 67.9.1-5

τὸ μὲν οὖν πλῆθος οὕτως τότε ἐδείπνισεν, αὐθις δὲ τοὺς πρώτους τῆς γερονσίας καὶ τῶν ἱπέων τὸν τρόπον οἶκον μελάντατον ἀπανταχόθεν ἕκ τε τῆς ὀροφῆς καὶ ἕκ τῶν τοίχων τοῦ τ' ἐδάφους παρασκευάσας, καὶ κλισίας ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ δαπέδου γυμνάς ὁμοίως αὐτοῦς μόνους νυκτὸς ἄνευ τῶν ἀκολουθῶν. καὶ πρῶτον μὲν στήλην ταφοειδῆ ἢ ἐκάστῳ σφῶν παρέστησε, τὸ τε ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἔχουσαν καὶ λυχνόχον μικρὸν, οἷος ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις κρεμάννυται: ἔπειτα παῖδες εὐπρεπεῖς γυμνοί, μέλανι καὶ αὐτοὶ κεχρισμένοι, ἐσήλθον ὡς περεῖδωλα, καὶ περιελθόντες αὐτοῦς μετ' ὀρχήσεώς τινος φοβερᾶς πρὸ ποδῶν ἰδρῦθησαν: καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο πάνθ' ὅσα περ ἐν τοῖς ἐναγίσμασιν ἀγαθίζονται, καὶ ἐκεῖνοις μέλανα ἐν σκεύεσιν ὁμοίοις προσηνέχθη, ὥστε καὶ φοβεῖσθαι καὶ τρέμειν καθ' ἕκαστον αὐτῶν πάντας, αἰεὶ τε ὄσον οὐκ ἤδη σφαγῆσεσθαι προσδέχεσθαι, ἄλλως τε καὶ ὅτι παρά τε τῶν ἄλλων σιωπῆ πολλὴ ὡς περ ἐν τεθνηκόσιν ἤδη ἦν, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Δομιτιανὸς πάντα ἕξ τε θανάτους καὶ ἐς σφαγᾶς φέροντα διελάλει. τέλος δὲ ἀφῆκε μὲν αὐτοῦς, προαπαλλάξας δὲ δὴ τοὺς οἰκέτας σφῶν τοὺς ἐν τοῖς προθύροις ἐστήκότας, δι' ἐτέρων τινῶν ἀγνώστων τοὺς μὲν ὀχήμασι τοὺς δὲ φορεῖας παραδοὺς πολὺ πλέον δέος αὐτοῖς ἐπέβαλε. ἄρτι δὲ ἕκαστος σφῶν οἴκαδε ἐσεληλύθει καὶ τρόπον τινὰ ἀναπνεῖν ἤρχετο, καὶ αὐτῶ ἐσηγγέλθη ὅτι παρά τοῦ Ἀυγούστου τινος ἦκοι. προσδοκῶντων τε ἐκ τούτου τότε δὴ πάντως ἀπολεῖσθαι, ἐσεκόμισέ τις τὴν στήλην ἀργυρᾶν οὖσαν, εἴτ' ἄλλος ἄλλο τι καὶ ἕτεροζῆτρον τῶν σκευῶν τῶν ἐν τῷ δείπνῳ παρατεθέντων, πολυτελεστάτου τινὸς γένους πεποιημένα: καὶ τέλος ὁ παῖς ἐκεῖνος, τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐκάστῳ, λελουμένος τε καὶ κεκοσμημένος ... καὶ οὕτω διὰ πάσης τῆς νυκτὸς φοβούμενοι τὰ δῶρα ἔλαβον.

At this time, then, he feasted the populace as described; and on another occasion he entertained the foremost men among the senators and knights in the following fashion. He prepared a room that was pitch black on every side, ceiling, walls and floor, and had made ready bare couches of the same color resting on the uncovered floor; then he invited his guests alone at night without their attendants. And first he set beside each of them a slab shaped like a gravestone, bearing the guest's name and also a small lamp, such as hang in tombs. Next comely naked boys, likewise painted black, entered like phantoms, and after encircling the guests in an awe-inspiring dance took up their stations at their feet. After this all the things that are commonly offered at the sacrifices to departed spirits were likewise set before the guests, all of the black and in dishes of a similar color. Consequently, every single one of the guests feared and trembled and was kept in constant expectation of having his throat cut the next moment, the more so as on the part of everybody but Domitian there was dead silence, as if they were already in the realms of the dead, and the emperor himself conversed only upon topics relating to death and slaughter. Finally he dismissed them; but he had first removed their slaves, who had stood in the vestibule, and now gave his guests in charge of other slaves, whom they did not know, to be conveyed either in carriages or litters, and by this procedure he filled them with far greater fear. And scarcely had each guest reach his home and was beginning to get his breath again, as one might say, when word was brought him that a messenger from the Augustus had come. While they were accordingly expecting to perish this time in any case, one person brought in the slab, which was of silver, and then others in turn brought in various articles, including the dishes that had been set before them at the dinner, which were constructed of very costly material; and last of all [came] that particular boy who had been each guest's familiar spirit, now washed and adorned. Thus after having passed the entire night in terror, they received the gifts.  
(Trans. E. Cary)

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