

## Martial, Translated from the Latin by George Held

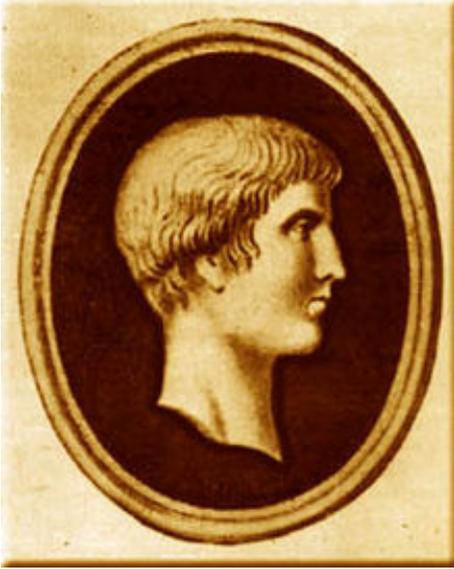


In this installment, we're excited to share some new translations from the Latin—a series of epigrams by Martial translated by George Held. We hope you'll appreciate the trip to ancient times, the authors' daring language, as well as these witty English renditions.

**We'd love to hear from you!** Find us on Twitter [@TranslateMonth](#), tag us using #NTM2018 and #TranslateMonth2018, join our mailing list, submit a translation month event, or like our [Facebook](#) page. And remember, in September and beyond: read and share with your friends your favorite literary translations, celebrating the world's heritage in one breath. We hope our month-long translation feat inspires and delights you.

—*Claudia Serea and Loren Kleinman*

**Martial (A.D. 40-104)**



**Marcus Valerius Martialis** (A.D. 40-104), or Martial, was born in Spain and flourished in Rome. His greatest achievement remains his 1500 epigrams, in which he depicts, often satirically, the behavior of his fellow Romans and perfects the form in Latin. His influence appears in the work of virtually every epigrammatist since.

**XI.97**

I can do it four times  
in one night.

I can do you, Tess, once  
in four years.

**XI.63**

In the bath, Philip, you observe us  
and ask repeatedly why my beardless boys  
are so well hung. I'll answer you frankly:  
Philip, they bugger the curious.

**XI.105**

You were sending me, Garry,  
a pound of salt,  
now a quarter.

Pay me back, Garry,  
at least a half.

**XII.54**

Redheaded, black-faced,  
club-footed, stye-eyed:  
It's great, Zoilus,  
if you're a good guy.

**II.62**

You pluck your chest, your legs, your arms;  
your shaved prick is ringed with short hairs.  
This you do, Labienus – who doesn't know? –  
for your girlfriend. For whom, Labienus,  
do you depilate around your anus?

**XII.71**

Once asked, Lygdus, you refuse me anything.  
But once, Lygdus, you refused me nothing.

**XII.86**

Here for you are thirty boys and thirty girls;  
one dick, and it doesn't stand.  
What will you do?

**XI.81**

An old man and eunuch Dindymus both hassle Ellen,  
and the girl tosses about dry in the middle of the bed.

One's weakness and the other's years make them fail at the task,  
so each labors to excite himself, without effect.

She prays for mercy, for herself and the two misfits,  
that you, Venus, make the one young, the other a man.

### About the translator



**George Held's** translations of Martial's epigrams have appeared in many journals, including *Circumference*, *Ezra*, *Transference*, and *Notre Dame Review*, and in his chapbook *Martial Artist* (Toad Press, 2005). A new selection of Martial's epigrams, *Innuendo & Insult*, will be published by Poets Wear Prada, Hoboken, NJ.