

## NISBET ON MARTIAL BOOK 12: TWO NOTES

## ABSTRACT

*These notes present two, hitherto largely unnoticed, conjectures by Professor R.G.M. Nisbet, relating to Martial Book 12.*

**Keywords:** Martial; epigram; Nisbet; textual criticism; conjectures

These notes have their origin in and are greatly influenced by the 1988 Oxford D.Phil. Thesis by M.N.R. Bowie, a commentary on Martial Book 12, which was supervised by Professor R.G.M. Nisbet and contains two conjectures by him which have not generally been noticed by later scholarship and appear worthy of consideration.<sup>1</sup>

## MARTIAL 12.4(5)

longior undecimi nobis decimique libelli  
artatus labor est et breue rasis opus.  
plura legant uacui, quibus otia tuta dedisti:  
haec lege tu, Caesar; forsan et illa leges.

The text printed is from D.R. Shackleton Bailey's Teubner (Stuttgart, 1990). The poem describes the shortening of Martial's tenth and eleventh books, and expresses the hope that the emperor will find the time to read these—and perhaps even the longer versions as well.

Shackleton Bailey's understanding of the opening couplet is reflected by his Loeb translation (3 vols., Cambridge, MA, 1993): 'The longer labor of my tenth and eleventh books has been compressed and has filed down my work to brevity.' He adds, in a footnote on 'filed', 'He might have said "I have filed"' (vol. 3, page 95). Compare his Teubner apparatus, which derives from Heraeus's Teubner (Leipzig, 1925, rev. 1982), where, after citing Martial 8.71.8 *rasa selibra*, he glosses *breue rasis opus* as 'br. radendo fecit o.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See M.N.R. Bowie, 'Martial Book XII – a commentary' (Diss., University of Oxford, 1988). I am very grateful to the Revd Dr Michael Bowie for his ready agreement that these conjectures should be more widely shared and for his willingness in allowing me to present them. Of course, he is in no way responsible for the manner in which I have done so, or any mistakes I have made or infelicities I have admitted in the process.

Nisbet's British Academy Memoir, by S.J. Harrison, makes regular reference to his interest in textual criticism: [www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publishing/memoirs/13/nisbet-robin-george-murdoch-1925-2013/](http://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publishing/memoirs/13/nisbet-robin-george-murdoch-1925-2013/) (accessed 7 January 2021). Note also M. Winterbottom's foreword to S.J. Harrison (ed.), *R.G.M. Nisbet: Collected Papers on Latin Literature* (Oxford, 1995), vii, where Nisbet's practice is related to that of Housman, described in the essay 'Housman's Juvenal' in the same volume, at 272–92; a version of this paper also appears in D. Butterfield and C. Stray (edd.), *A.E. Housman: Classical Scholar* (London, 2009), 45–63. Nisbet gives an account of his own theories and practice in making conjectures in his essay on 'How textual conjectures are made' in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *R.G.M. Nisbet: Collected Papers on Latin Literature* (Oxford, 1995), 338–61.

<sup>2</sup> Mart. 8.71.8 refers to a bare half-pound of silver in the form of a cup which has been sent as a meagre present.

If this Shackleton Bailey/Heraeus gloss is to be accepted, something like ‘and the abridgement of Books 10 and 11’ must be understood as the subject of *rasit*. Otherwise, *labor* must be taken in two different ways, first as signifying the original effort in producing the two books and then as referring to the new work in reducing the books. Both explanations appear artificial and contrived.

Dr Bowie suggests ad loc. that *rasit* should ‘at least be obelized’ but, after commenting that the easiest solution would be a verb which could have *opus* as its subject, he also records Nisbet’s suggestion that instead of *rasit* one should read *prodit* or, better, *surgit*. Bowie compares Prop. 4.1.67 *tibi surgit opus*, *Laus Pisonis* 1 and Ov. *Am.* 1.1.17 *cum bene surrexit ... noua pagina*, on which see McKeown ad loc. (not available in 1988),<sup>3</sup> who goes into greater detail.

## MARTIAL 12.59

tantum dat tibi Roma basiorum	
post annos modo quindecim reuerso	
quantum Lesbia non dedit Catullo.	
te uicinia tota, te pilosus	
hircoso premit osculo colonus;	5
hinc instat tibi textor, inde fullo,	
hinc sutor modo pelle basiata,	
hinc menti dominus periculosi,	
†hinc† dexiocholus, inde lippus	
fellatorque recensque cunnilingus.	10
iam tanti tibi non fuit redire.	

The text printed is again from Shackleton Bailey’s Teubner. This poem questions whether it was worth returning to Rome after an absence of fifteen years if it meant having to endure the greeting kisses of a range of *basiatores* by whom one would prefer not to be kissed. Compare Mart. 11.98, Martial’s fullest attack on nuisance-kissers, on which see Kay ad loc.<sup>4</sup>

Critical attention has focussed on line 9, which, as transmitted, is a syllable short. Suspicion initially fell on the unparalleled *dexiocholus*, but this was eventually explained by Housman:<sup>5</sup> ‘Men lame of the right leg were to be dreaded because it was unlucky to meet them.’ Housman restored the line by arguing that, after the opening two lines, a personal touch was required and by introducing the vocative *Rex* (a name unparalleled in Martial): *hinc<, Rex,> dexiocholus, inde lippus*; but, as Friedländer notes ad loc., *quindecim* is simply an indefinite large number;<sup>6</sup> and *tibi/te* might be generalizing, referring to anyone who has returned to Rome after a long period and finds disconcerting the new custom of greeting kisses.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> J.C. McKeown, *Ovid Amores. Text, Prolegomena and Commentary. Volume II. A Commentary on Book One* (Leeds, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> N.M. Kay, *Martial Book XI. A Commentary* (London, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> A.E. Housman, ‘Martial XII.59.9’, *CR* 40 (1926), 19 = J. Diggle and F.R.D. Goodyear (edd.), *The Classical Papers of A.E. Housman* (Cambridge, 1972), 3.1105.

<sup>6</sup> L. Friedlaender, *M. Valerii Martialis Epigrammaton libri* (Leipzig, 1886). Cf. Kay (n. 4), on Mart. 11.6.13 *quindecim* and G. Galán Vioque (transl. J.J. Zoltowski), *Martial, Book VII. A Commentary* (Leiden / Boston / Köln, 2002), on Mart. 7.10.15 *quindecies*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Bowie (n. 1), ad loc. For *tu* meaning ‘one’, cf. e.g. Catull. 22.9 *haec cum legas tu* (‘when one reads these things’), where its meaning is confirmed by its redundancy after the indefinite subjunctive *legas* in a temporal clause (cf. C.J. Fordyce, *Catullus. A Commentary* [Oxford, 1961], ad loc.).

Following Lindsay (see his OCT apparatus criticus; first edition 1903; second edition 1929), Heraeus printed *hinc et dexiocholos* in his Teubner. For this there is some slight manuscript support (MS  $\beta$  has *hinc dexiocholos et*) and it is the text favoured *metri causa* by Bowie,<sup>8</sup> but the *et* was dismissed by Housman, in his review of Heraeus, as being ‘worse than superabundant’.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, Lindsay suggested *istinc dex-*. Worth noting, however, is Nisbet’s suggestion *illinc*. Bowie comments that it is attractive after three previous uses of *hinc* and before *inde*. He might perhaps also have compared Mart. 11.98.3 *et hinc et illinc* (again, of *basiatores* on all sides); cf. 12.57.7–9 *hinc ... illinc* (of people on all sides in Rome whose noise prevents Martial from sleeping).

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## PLINY, *LETTERS* 10.98. A METAPHOR FOR THE SOLUTION TO THE CHRISTIAN PROBLEM?

### ABSTRACT

*I argue that letter 98 of Book 10 of Pliny’s Letters (= Epistulae) was deliberately moved from its original position in the sequence of letters in order to serve as a metaphor for the solution to the problem of Christians in Bithynia and Pontus. This solves a chronological problem in Pliny’s Letters and is evidence of the hand of an active editor.*

**Keywords:** Pliny the Younger; Christianity; Trajan; Bithynia; Pontus

It has long been known that there is a problem with the apparent chronological order of letters 90–110 of Book 10 of Pliny’s *Letters*. These letters are set in the province of Pontus, which lay east of Pliny’s other province, Bithynia. Pontus was a long, narrow region that stretched along the seacoast from Amastris in the west to Sinope, the capital, and on to Amisus in the east. From Amastris to Amisus along the coast-road was a distance of 280 miles. Pliny entered this area in the fall and travelled in it during the winter (*Ep.* 10.88 was written on the occasion of Trajan’s birthday, 18 September, while *Ep.* 10.100 records New Year’s vows). Four of the letters in the group (*Ep.* 10.90–110) have geographical references. In *Ep.* 10.90, Pliny is in Sinope dealing with the water supply; he has apparently just arrived (all previous letters are set in Bithynia). In *Ep.* 10.92 he is in Amisus handling the question of their benefit societies; in *Ep.* 10.98 he is then in Amastris, describing a plan to cover a filthy stream; and in *Ep.* 10.110 he is back in Amisus, dealing with donations.

<sup>8</sup> This is also the text printed in R. Moreno Soldevila, J. Fernández and E. Montero Cartelle, *Marco Valerio Marcial, Epigramas* (Madrid, 2005), 2.194.

<sup>9</sup> A.E. Housman, ‘Heraeus’ Martial’, *CR* 39 (1925), 199–203, at 200–1 = Diggle and Goodyear (n. 5), 3.1099–104, at 3.1100–1.